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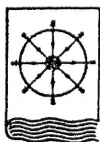


# CULTURAL CONTACTS BETWEEN ARYANS AND DRAVIDIANS



by

K. A. NILAKANTA SASTRI



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## Foreword

THE CONTENTS of the present book represent four lectures delivered in 1964 under a scheme for teaching and research in the Early History of Peninsular India in the Department of History, Patna University. These have been made possible by a grant sanctioned by the Bihar State University Commission, whose Deputy Chairman Shri K. S. V. Raman initiated the scheme. We were fortunate in having Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, the foremost authority on the subject, for the first series of these lectures, which discuss the nature of the social, religious and linguistic contacts between the Aryans and the Dravidians. Professor Sastri not only reevaluates recent studies on the origins of the Aryans and Dravidians but also throws light on the formation of the Indo-Aryan society. Throughout these lectures the Aryans and Dravidians do not appear as distinct racial groups but represent different languages and cultures. It is hoped that the book will stimulate younger

## FOREWORD

scholars to follow up and extend this study on new lines, including the investigation of material and technological contacts between different regions and peoples in the country.

It is a pity that on account of his failing eyesight it has not been possible for Professor Nilakanta Sastri to see these lectures through the press, which has been done by Dr (Mrs) Suvira Jaiswal and Dr D. N. Jha. I wish to thank them.

*Department of History*  
*Patna University*  
31 May 1967

R. S. SHARMA



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## Culture Contacts

### PREFATORY

THE SUBJECT for these lectures suggested by Professor R. S. Sharma is "Cultural Contacts between Dravidians and Aryans". You know that in South India it is at the moment of great topical interest. Who in all India has not heard of the D.K.<sup>1</sup> and D.M.K.<sup>2</sup> and their aims and activities in the political and social field? Even otherwise, the subject is one of great academic interest, though a very complicated one, and an attempt at a proper comprehension of these relations is fundamental to a fruitful understanding of the story of Indian Civilization.

It is wellknown that in all countries of the world a

<sup>1</sup> Dravida Kazhagam.

<sup>2</sup> Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

certain polarity develops between north and south owing to differences in the physical and climatic conditions between widely separated latitudes of the earth. In India this polarity has been accentuated by differences in language and culture which have persisted through the ages, and by some modern assumptions and identifications of an unfounded character. Notable among such facile assumptions are the ideas that the North of India is Aryan, Brahmin and Sanskrit while the South is Dravidian, non-Brahmin and Tamil (Dravidian). This derives some plausible support from etymology, because Ayyar, Ayyangar, etc. which are suffixes to Brahmin names are all derivatives of Ārya. It will be the aim of these lectures to demonstrate that the truth is much more complex than the assumptions just noticed which have become articles of faith among some propagandists.

The use of Aryan and Dravidian as racial terms is unknown to scientific students of anthropology. When Max Müller found that some of his earlier writings on Indo-European philology had been misunderstood and people began to talk as if an Aryan race existed, he took great care to deprecate the inference of race from language, and said that an Aryan race had no more real existence than a brachycephalic language. But, as often happens, this warning went unheeded, and several decades later Julian Huxley, among others, felt the need to repeat and underline it. In an essay on "Eugenics and Society" (No. 2 in his *Uniqueness of Man*, 1941) he said: "In the practical handling of every so-called racial problem, the error seems invariably to have been made of confusing genetic with cultural factors. The former alone could legitimately be called racial; but indeed the very term race disinte-

grates when subjected to modern genetic analysis. The net results are: *Firstly*, that it would be best to drop the term *race* from our vocabulary, both scientific and popular, as applied to man; and *secondly*, and more importantly, for our present purpose, that until we equalize environmental opportunity, by making it more favourable for those less favoured, we cannot make any pronouncements worthy to be called scientific as to the genetic differences in mental characters between different ethnic stocks." This caution is often neglected with disastrous practical results as witnessed in the Herrenvolk theory and its consequences and the Dravidian secessionism of the D.M.K. in India.

The force of Huxley's warning and its supreme necessity are underlined by another consideration. There is little direct evidence available on the beginnings or the history of 'racial' differentiation, and anthropologists depend largely on recent and current anthropometrical data for their conjectures on the races of men five, six or seven thousand years ago. And no two scholars agree in their inferences and conclusions.

But these uncertainties and tentatives of science have not prevented the growth at times of extreme 'race consciousness' among modern peoples, which exhibits itself in many forms and lead to much pseudo-scientific research. Some of the Tamils claim, for instance, that the Tamil land was the original home of man and civilization (P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar), a claim which flies in the face of modern archaeology as represented by Leakey's work in E. Africa and that of other archaeologists in Palestine and the Fertile Crescent. They are tempted to treat legend as history and link the chronology of the Saṅgam

period with the geological postulate of Lemuria and thus seek to establish hoary antiquity for the Tamil language and culture; but the story of the three Śaṅgams which flourished at long intervals for about ten thousand years and includes among the members of the Śaṅgams some divinities of the Hindu pantheon, this story is not heard of earlier than in the commentary on *Iraiyaṇār Ahapporūl* which may be of the eighth or ninth century A.D. at the earliest. The wide gulf between the ten thousand years of the literary legend and the hundreds of millions of years of the geological ages is silently passed over from the heights of their credulity. They claim further that the Indus Valley Civilization of Harappa and its script are the creations of Tamils and have been strongly supported in this by the work of the late Rev. H. Heras, S. J. whose speculations on this subject have been practically ignored by the world of scientific scholarship. Again, they have not hesitated even to claim that some at least of the Vedic tribes like the Bharatas (in fact one of the most important among them) were also Tamils<sup>3</sup> though there is not a shred of evidence for this quixotic view.

#### SCOPE OF THESE LECTURES

A proper approach to the problems of our study in these lectures involves, first of all, a lively regard for the accumulating evidence from modern archaeology which, in recent years, has developed into a multi-faced discipline, yielding data and conclusions much more reliable than

<sup>3</sup> N. S. Kandiah Pillai, *Tamilar Charitam* (Madras: Orrumai Office, 1939).

the evidence from literature, folklore and so on. Secondly, it involves a systematic revaluation in the light of new ideas and evidence of the linguistic and literary data, which were often all that was available in the last century, and of the older theories based on them. This is indeed an extensive and difficult task, much beyond the capacity of the present speaker who has been mainly a historian with a nodding acquaintance with allied disciplines. He can only deal with some aspects of the problems in a general way and perhaps indicate some lines of further work.

We use the terms Aryan and Dravidian in these lectures as convenient short descriptions of the languages and the cultures they carry, always with the reservation that no ethnic implications are involved. We shall also have to consider some factors of the pre-Dravidian epoch, and at some points our discussion may have to take a general account of the differentiation between North and South.

#### RECENT HISTORY OF THE SUBJECT

Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, the prevalent view of ancient Indian history tended to glorify the Aryans and their *Rgveda*, and treat the whole of Indian culture and civilization as their gift. H. R. Hall's suggestion put forward in his *Ancient History of the Near East* that the Sumerians may have been of Indian (Dravidian) origin was received with considerable scepticism. The discovery of the Indus Valley civilization in the twenties of the present century brought a great change, and linked pre-historic India, at least the North-west, more clearly with Western Asia and Eastern Mediter-

ranean than ever before. Since then, there has been a strong reaction which stresses the pre-Aryan elements in India's culture and apparently goes a little too far in this direction. There have also been attempts to get behind the Dravidian stage of pre-Aryan and identify a pre-Dravidian, particularly by the French school of philologists represented by Przyluski, Sylvain Levi, Bloch and others, and some of their main contributions were collected and translated by the late Dr P. C. Bagchi and published as a book *Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India*, issued several years ago by the University of Calcutta. This new development was subjected to a critical review by A. B. Keith in Appendix G to his *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda* (1925), and his conclusion was stated thus: "We may readily believe in pre-Dravidian language and religion or even political organization as affecting the same phenomena among the Vedic peoples, but we still lack strict proof" (p. 433). But this estimate of Keith greatly underrates the results reached by the French school, and I think that J. H. Hutton is more balanced in his critique.<sup>4</sup> He refers to Beer's Zoological law that the most widely spread species in space are also the most widely spread in time, and points out that the Austro-Asiatic group, to which Muṇḍā and other languages belong, is most widely spread in the world—from Punjab to New Zealand, from Madagascar to Eastern Islands, and may well be pre-Dravidian. He thinks that some Muṇḍā group tribes survived the Dravidian thrust and became directly Aryanized while others became Dravidianized later by a Dravidian movement from the south in the post-Indo-Aryan period. The

<sup>4</sup> *Census of India*, 1931, I. i, para 154.

southern limit of the Muṇḍā group cannot be decided till the tribal dialects of the South have been fully analysed. They must be taken to have prevailed in the Deccan at one time if we accept Przyluski's derivation of the names Sātavāhana and Sātakarṇi from Muṇḍā *Sadam*, horse, *hapan*, son, and *kon*, son.<sup>5</sup> Muṇḍā has affinities with speeches in South East Asia and Pacific on the one side, and with the agglutinative Sumerian language to the west. How exactly it came to India is uncertain. Hutton postulates a common original home in Central or South East Asia, while Sylvain Levi and others favour an oceanic intrusion into India. The latter point to culture traits of eastern origin like the outrigger canoe,<sup>6</sup> cocoanut palm, the shouldered celt, etc. The tribal traditions of the Khasis and other Assamese tribes are also apparently of eastern origin. But we are not much concerned with the pre-Dravidian and need not pursue the subject much further. We must be, however, aware of the uncertainty in the range of influences exerted on Indo-Aryan by Dravidian and pre-Dravidian elements.

## MIGRATIONS

Most probably both Dravidians and Aryans came into India not all at one time, but in a series of waves separated by varying intervals of time, and Professor J. Burrow of Oxford has suggested that the Vedic speech was influenced not by the Dravidian languages of history as we know them, but by an earlier form, a sort of proto-Dra-

<sup>5</sup> JRAS 1929, p. 273 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Hornell, *Indian Boat Designs*, Memoirs, ASB VII, 1920.



vidian which long preceded them as well as the Aryan advent into India.<sup>7</sup> This postulates that Dravidian speech of some kind, primitive or proto—as we may describe it, at some remote past prevailed all over India including the northwest, and this general belief in the wide spread of Dravidian in India is held by many scholars still. As against this, however, is the view of Professor Fürer Haimendorf and others that the Dravidians were at no time spread over a wider area than we find them in historical times, that the mutations of Vedic speech and grammar are better explained by contacts with Austro-Asiatic speeches than with Dravidian, and that the presence of Brāhui in Baluchistan does not necessarily imply the prevalence of Dravidian along the land route from Western Asia into India, and may be explained as due to colonization from the south in relatively recent historical times.

### CHRONOLOGY

Turning for a moment to chronology, the peak of Harappan civilization is now placed generally between 2500 and 1500 B.C. Despite some feeble conjectures put forward by stray scholars to the contrary, this civilization must be taken to have been definitely and essentially pre-Vedic in its character and development, though the nature of its contact with Vedic civilization and the results of the contact are still questions beset by considerable uncertainty. The idea once held that this contact was direct and the Aryan impact violent and that the Indo-Aryan god Indra

<sup>7</sup> *Indo-Asian Culture*, April 1960, "Sanskrit and the pre-Aryan Tribes and Languages" (esp. pp. 338-39).

Purandara was the destroyer of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro no longer finds favour. It is now seen to have been an unwarranted simplification of much more complex processes. New archaeological evidence is accumulating that goes to show that the Indus Valley culture may have declined much before the Aryan advent, and that in the rest of India there were other cultures more or less contemporary with the Indus Valley culture at least in its latter phases, say from 2000 B.C.; we are not, however, yet able to correlate this new evidence with the language families involved. Round about 1200 B.C. is the date usually assumed for the Aryan advent into India. The Aryans are supposed to have brought in a type of pottery designated by archaeologists "Painted Grey Ware"; this correlation was put in some doubt by some recent C. 14 tests, but we have been told again that further tests actually confirm the date which has become "traditional." The evidence from Asia Minor, Boghaz Koi, c. 1400 B.C., does not contradict this though writers have differed on its exact significance as we shall see presently.

Our plan is to discuss first Dravidian and Aryan separately indicating the circumstances of their entry into India and then illustrate the results of their contact in India with the aid of typical instances from the different spheres of life. The time for systematic or exhaustive study of the questions involved is not yet come.

## DRAVIDIAN

It is often said, at least in South India, that the term "Dravidian" is a gift of Bishop Caldwell to modern Indian linguistics; this is not correct, though it is a fact that he was

the first to apply the term to a group of allied languages. In earlier times Drāviḍa was synonymous with Tamil. The great writer in Mīmāṃsā, Kumārila, (eighth century A.D.) in his *Śloka vārtika* (on I.3.5 on the Mīmāṃsā Sūtras) mentions that Aryans sanskritized *mlecha* words by adding suitable vowels to consonantal endings, and gives as examples: *cor odanan ityukte corapadavākyaṃ kalpayanti*; likewise *atar atara eva panthā; pāmp pāpa; mala (satya) mātā; vair (udara) vairi—sarvasya kṣudhitasya akāryapravartanāt*. He adds that similar vocables may be found in Parsi, Berber, Greek and Roman. The semantics is all wrong, but the philological range of the remarks is notable for Kumārila's time in India. They also suggest the possibility that Dravidian (Tamil) may also be regarded as one of the Prakrits of India, a view which occurs off and on in some later indigenous writings also.

In times much later than Kumārila's the term *Pan-cadrāviḍas* came into use to describe Brahmins of five groups which included Kannada, Telugu, Mahārāṣṭra, Kaṇṇāṭa (Tamil), and Gurjara.<sup>8</sup> Attention must be invited particularly to the presence of Gurjara and Mahārāṣṭra among the groups, which serves as a link between Dravidian and Aryan. The *Śabdakalpadruma*, a Sanskrit cyclopaedia compiled in the last century in Bengal, cites a verse from the *Skandapurāṇa* which applies not only to Brahmins but to the entire population of these lands:

*Karnātāscaiva Tailangū Gurjarā rāṣṭravāsinah  
Āndhraśca Drāviḍāḥ pañca Vindhyadakṣina vāsinah*

<sup>8</sup> See *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* in Tamil by Singaravelu Chettiyar (Madurai Tamil Śaṅgam, 1910); also Apte, *Sanskrit Dictionary* and the *Tamil Lexicon* of the Madras University.

So we find here five Drāviḍa nations south of the Vindhyas—but the list is notable in two ways: (1) It includes Gurjaras and Mahārāṣṭra, (2) it mentions Tailangas and Andhras separately and omits the Tamils from the “five Draviḍas” which is sure indication that the verse is corrupt in some way. In another list of nations south of the Vindhyas<sup>9</sup> the Gurjaras find no place; but as they do not figure in the northern list also, the lists possibly go back to pre-Gurjara times. Thus we see that Drāviḍa in the sense of Tamils and their land, and in a broader sense of the entire land south of the Vindhyas and their inhabitants was well-known long before Caldwell. Scholars differ in their estimates of the extent to which Vedic Aryan speech was influenced by Dravidian and Muṇḍā languages. Hutton (para 156) holds that Dravidian influence on phonetics (cerebrals) and vocabulary was much greater than Muṇḍā influences, though others take the opposite view. In the Indus Valley occur skeletons of all the types of people known at any time in India and they provide no clue to the proper answer to this problem even on the basis of tentative assumptions of correlations between racial types and language groups. Words like *nīra*, *mīna*, the story of the deluge unknown to the *R̥gveda* and doubtless of Sumerian origin, and the fact that Manu, the Saviour, is called Lord of Drāviḍa are important data, and so too perhaps is the presence of Brāhui in Baluchistan. Hutton draws attention to the fact that the Brāhui consider Mohenjo Daro the work of their ancestors who brought their culture from Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and the Eastern Mediterranean, but how far these admittedly

<sup>9</sup> *Mbh. Bhāṣmaparva*, ch. IX, 58-60, Kumbakonam edition.

modern beliefs may be taken to provide the correct clue to the distant past is a question.

More relevant may be the Dravidian place names traced in Mesopotamia and Iran by scholars like Schoner and L. V. Ramaswami Aiyar.<sup>10</sup> And G. W. Brown<sup>11</sup> studies similarities between Dravidian and Kharrian spoken in Mitanni at the bend of the Euphrates before and after the advent of the Indo-European invaders there. Dravidian languages and culture may thus be seen, in the light of such evidence, to hark back to the highlands of Anatolia, Armenia and Iran. The name Trimmlai by which the Lycians of Asia Minor called themselves, it has been pointed out often, makes a close approach in sound to Dramila (Tamil). Caldwell in his celebrated *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages* indicates a connection between Susian and Dravidian as regards structure. Apart from the Dravidian place names already mentioned, the Hurrian and Kassite languages are said to possess a clearly demonstrable affinity with Dravidian, and one writer has connected Elamite with Brāhui. We have to deal with the whole problem in a cautious and tentative manner, because no single scholar, however learned, can command equal competence in all the varied lines of evidence involved in a final consideration of the question. Some genetic connection between all the languages we have named seems very probable. Western Asia being the home of Elamite, it seems not unlikely that Dravidian, or rather proto-Dravidian, language and its speakers also

<sup>10</sup> *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, Vol. XX, 1929-30.

<sup>11</sup> *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 50, p. 273 ff.

reached India from this part of the world. Inheritance through women, the cult of the Mother Goddess under the name of the Lady of the Mountain (cf. Pārvatī) and the snake cult are notable culture traits common between these lands and South India.

### EARLY MYTHS

Schayer published in 1935<sup>12</sup> a short note on the Russian version of the *Puruṣasūkta*—the well-known hymn in the last part of the *Ṛgveda* which contains the myth of the origin of the world from the members and organs of the Cosmic Man (*Puruṣa*). He quotes Zimmer's opinion that the parallelism between the macrocosm and microcosm—an essential element of the *Puruṣasūkta*, is of Babylonian origin,<sup>13</sup> besides other views, and adds: "I think that all these opinions are, in a certain sense, right, and wrong in another. The myth of the Cosmic Man is undoubtedly of Asiatic origin; nevertheless it is neither Aryan nor Semitic, but belongs most probably to pre-Aryan and pre-Semitic civilization, the realm of which must not be conceived within too narrow boundaries. It extends from Aegea in Asia Minor across Mesopotamia and Iran to India and comes into contact with Austro-Asiatic and Oceanian civilizations. In this case the Indian and Iranian variants would be independent developments of a myth belonging to the common Indo-Iranian, but non-Aryan, substratum." (p. 322) This recondite theory furnishes a good background against which some recent theories of

<sup>12</sup> *Archiv Orientalni*, vii, pp. 319-23.

<sup>13</sup> *ZDMG*. N. F., Vol. I, p. 36.

Dravidian origins and their relations to the West may be viewed.

#### RECENT THEORIES OF DRAVIDIAN ORIGINS

I am referring to the theories reviewed and synthesized recently by the late N. Lahovary, a Roumanian diplomat and linguist, who devoted the last dozen years or so (*d.* 1963) of his life, to a comparative study of Dravidian and Basque or Alpine toponymy where the pre-Aryan languages of southern Europe have left tangible marks. He published the results of his study in learned periodicals in several languages in Europe, and then collected them in a French book which he revised subsequently with a view to an English version of it calculated to suit the needs of Indian readers. This final version is the book *Dravidian Origins and the West*.<sup>14</sup> It carries a formidable bibliography, and is by no means easy reading for the lay reader. The position of Lahovary may be briefly summarized as follows: He seeks to show that just as Indo-Aryan languages of Northern India are related to the Indo-European languages of Northern and Eastern Europe, so also the Dravidian languages of South India are more or less closely related to a Near-Eastern and Mediterranean agglutinative group of languages of pre-Indo-European times. This type of languages covered a vast area round the Mediterranean and in the Near East in those remote times. Prehistoric archaeology gives clear indications of the steps by which this ancient linguistic unity was broken by geographical changes and racial migrations, the

<sup>14</sup> Orient Longmans, 1963.

results being sometimes cataclysmic in character. Lahovary seeks to establish his thesis mainly by laying stress on the oldest elements in Basque—a pre-Indo-European language which still survives in the Pyrenees on the borderland between France and Spain in the paleocaucasian idioms, and in the Dravidian languages of South India, and by tracing the relics of this primitive type of language also in Semitic, Hamitic and in Indo-European. The pre-Aryan languages of Greece belonged to this Mediterranean group, although they were comparatively newcomers there, successors rather than sisters of ancient Basque.

There is nothing intrinsically improbable in these views, though they startle one by their novelty and have been violently repudiated by some of our best-known linguists whose opinions are entitled to weight. But a learned reviewer of the French original of this book has reminded us that in Bopp's day, the classical philologists who had not so far studied any other languages but Greek and Latin were filled with indignation at the attempt to extend the field of research to other far away and little-known languages and to postulate a common ancestry for them in the remote past; and that it took a century and a half for them to learn that after all Bopp was right. The evidence that Lahovary has set out in the volume is extensive and obviously not all of it of equal value, not all of it equally precise and authentic. But it deserves consideration at the hands of scientific professional philologists who should consider the subject without bias.

Without attempting any final estimate of this revolutionary thesis for which task I am not competent, and perhaps the time is not yet come, we may note that it



renders plausible the view that Dravidian speech came to India in several waves spread over long stretches of time. If this is correct, Haimendorf's view that one of these waves, perhaps among the latest, if not the last, comprised the authors of the megalithic culture which had a knowledge of iron and most probably also of cultivating rice by means of artificial irrigation becomes quite plausible. Haimendorf, however, seems to hold the opinion that the megalithic builders were the earliest Dravidians to reach India and that by sea, and that Dravidian speeches never occupied a much wider area than where we find them today. These views, however, have not found general acceptance. But in his Presidential Address to the Archaeological section of the All India Oriental Conference in 1957, Dr Aryendra Sarma categorically supported the views of Haimendorf and suggested: "Any non-Indo-European R̥gvedic words if found in Dravidian or Muṇḍā have to be considered as having come into these languages from old Indo-Aryan, since there is no evidence of Aryan-Dravidian contact during the R̥gvedic period. The story of Aryan invasion and of Dravidians being pushed out of Northern India has no real basis. Aryan-Dravidian contacts—friendly contacts—are clearly in evidence from fifth century B.C. onwards, and may have begun a little earlier. Dravidian loan words in classical Sanskrit therefore are an obvious possibility. But even here, one has to be cautious, particularly because we do not have before us a clear picture of the early Dravidian or Muṇḍā. Particular care should be taken with regard to such old Indo-Aryan words as are found in both Muṇḍā and Dravidian. In all probability these have been adopted by both from old Indo-Aryan." In other words, he clearly

rejects the view of Dravidians having once spread all over India, as well as Burrow's hypothesis of a proto-Dravidian, different from modern Dravidian as known in history and literature.<sup>15</sup>

Professor Burrow who has considered the question at some length in his book *The Sanskrit Language*<sup>16</sup> takes a middle position. Speaking of the Vedic language and classical Sanskrit he says: "The vocabulary was further enriched from outside Indo-Aryan itself. The pre-existing vernaculars made a sizeable contribution to the Sanskrit vocabulary. The influence is strongest, it seems, in the case of Dravidian words that can be identified with certainty as Dravidian and run into several hundred. Though a few are found already in the Vedic language, the majority do not become current before the classical language. A smaller proportion was provided by the Kolarian languages. Occasionally words were introduced from outside India, e.g. from Iranian (*vārabāṇa*, 'breast plate') or from Greek (*hora*, hour), but these were always rare."<sup>17</sup> Again the Sanskrit vocabulary is composite, and the total number of (such) extraneous words is very large. Their source is mainly to be found in pre-Aryan languages of India. It is likely that there existed in India various linguistic groups which have been totally extinguished by the advance of Indo-Aryan, and in so far as Sanskrit has drawn words from such sources, their origin must remain for ever unknown. On the other hand those non-Aryan languages which have maintained their independent exis-

<sup>15</sup> *Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference*, Delhi, 1959, p. 196.

<sup>16</sup> Faber, London, 1955.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

tence form a valuable source for the investigation of the extraneous elements in Sanskrit.’<sup>18</sup>

## LANGUAGE AND RACE

The race history of the subcontinent, by which we mean the order in which different ethnic stocks came to mingle with and form part of the population of India, is extremely confused, and it seems virtually impossible to connect particular language groups with definite ethnic stocks. Sir Herbert Risley was the leading authority at the beginning of the century and his views found full expression on the census reports of 1901 and in his well-known book, *The People of India*. He held the view that at one remote period the whole of India was an isolated ethnic unity occupied by a single people whom he called “Dravidian” tacitly implying great antiquity also for the languages so described, and that the present populations of the different parts of India represent mixtures in varying degrees of several other incoming “races” with the Dravidians, and his terminology abounded in compound terms like “Aryo-Dravidian”, “Scythio-Dravidian”, “Mongoli-Dravidian” and so on. But these views no longer hold, and on further study, India’s isolation is seen to be a myth and she is now likened more to a net collecting the flotsam and jetsam of all Asia as Hutton puts it.<sup>19</sup> Of Risley’s “races” the Dravidian has been the first to go. The reconstructions of racial history based on recent anthropometry are very vague and doubtful and differ with different writers, and

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>19</sup> *Census Report*, 1931, I. i., p. 440.

we have not much to gain for the elucidation of our questions by pursuing these speculations in any detail. The view sometimes urged that Dravidian speakers were autochthonous descendants of the neolithic folk seems to find no tangible support from any evidence either inside or outside the Tamil land, but a mere guess possibly prompted by "patriotism" calculated to deny all "foreign" origins and connections. Likewise the claims often made for an advanced pre-Aryan Dravidian civilization and sometimes based on fantastic concepts of a Vānara or Rākṣasa civilization depicted in the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Vālmīki will be unhesitatingly dismissed by all sober students of history. Caldwell attempted to reconstruct the pre-Aryan civilization of the "primitive Dravidians" and I reproduce the following extracts from his *Comparative Grammar*<sup>20</sup> calculated to give an idea of the method he followed and the conclusions he reached: "If we eliminate from the Tamil language the whole of its Sanskrit derivatives, the primitive Dravidian words that remain will furnish us with a faithful picture of the single life of the non-Aryanized Dravidians. From the evidence of the words in use amongst the early Tamilians, we learn the following items of information. They had 'kings' who dwelt in 'strong houses' and ruled over small 'districts of the country'. They had minstrels who recited 'songs' at 'festivals', and they seem to have had alphabetical 'characters' written with a style on palmyra leaves. A bundle of those leaves was called 'a book'; they acknowledged the existence of God, whom they called *Ko*, or king—a realistic title little-known to orthodox Hinduism. They erected to his honour

<sup>20</sup> University of Madras, reprint, 1956, pp. 113-14.

a 'temple', which they called *ko-il*, God's house. They had 'laws' and 'customs', but no lawyers or judges. Marriage existed among them. They were acquainted with the ordinary metals, with the exception of 'tin', 'lead' and 'zinc' 'canoes', 'boats', and even ships (small 'decked' coasting vessels), no acquaintance with any people beyond sea, except in Ceylon, which was then, perhaps, accessible on foot at low water, and no word expresses the geographical idea of 'island' or 'continent'. They were well-acquainted with 'agriculture' and delighted in 'war'. They were armed with 'bows' and 'arrows', with 'spears' and 'swords'. All the ordinary or necessary arts of life, including 'spinning', 'weaving' and 'dyeing' existed among them. They excelled in 'pottery' as their places of sepulchre show.

"This brief illustration, from the primitive Tamil vocabulary of the social condition of the Dravidians prior to the arrival of the Brahmans, will suffice to prove that the elements of civilization already existed among them."

A legitimate doubt may cross the reader's mind if "writings" and "books" are properly included in the outfit of primitive Dravidians; similar doubts have been raised about the reconstruction by Krom of primitive Indonesian culture by the same method as Caldwell's; but even setting aside this doubt and accepting the picture as drawn by Caldwell, we can say only that the Dravidians had attained the "elements of civilization" as Caldwell puts it, and this is a far cry from the glorious pre-Aryan Tamil civilization of which alluring pictures are painted by popular writers and orators of the Tamil country. I am not aware of the existence of any significant study of the subject later than Caldwell's. It is perhaps worth while noting, by the way, that Caldwell's use of "Brahmans" as synony-

mous with "Aryans" in his scientific work may be said to provide the basis in modern times of the facile identification of Ārya, Brāhman, Sanskrit and North which has been the root of much current social and political trouble.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Archaeology shows the prevalence of a widespread chalcolithic culture in the peninsular region, contemporaneous with the later and declining phases of the Indus Valley culture, and a comprehensive survey of the evidence so far obtained has been made by Dr Sankalia in *Prehistory and Proto-history in India and Pakistan*,<sup>21</sup> but the absence of written evidence and of a key to the decipherment of the Indus script render it virtually impossible to correlate the archaeological data with the speeches and cultures with which we are primarily concerned here. "Those who believe in the theory of independent origination of cultures," writes Dr Sankalia, "would argue that the various cultures in different parts of India which archaeology has revealed during the last ten years show that when the great Indus civilization was flourishing in Sind, Saurāṣṭra, and the Panjāb, the rest of India was developing the various regional cultures." "The diffusionists on the contrary," continues Dr Sankalia, "discern in these cultures, though known so far in some cases only by pottery—which is but an industry and not the totality of a culture—the spread of Aryan or Dravidian speaking people from Iran or Central and Western Asia which in our present knowledge had witnessed the various steps in the growth and birth

<sup>21</sup> University of Bombay, 1962, pp. 270-71.

of civilization. In support of this view is pressed the stock argument of movement of peoples in about 2000 B.C. and earlier owing to pressure from stronger groups. Within India destruction of the Indus civilization and dispersal of refugees and survivors to places of safety and more favourable areas was also cited as an argument for the civilizing touch to the rest of India which was believed to be inhabited by hunters and food-gatherers." Thus from the juxtaposition of the *Mahābhārata* and Painted Grey-Ware sites in the Gangetic valley, and the occurrence of the latter in Sind and Baluchistan and in the distant Thessaly, Shri Lal has pointed out the possibility of the bearers of this culture being a group of Aryans from Shah Tepe or some such site in Iran.

"Likewise the writer (Sankalia) has collected evidence from recent excavations at Navdatoli, Chandoli and elsewhere showing how one may argue for another Iranian wave or waves of peoples and/or ideas which helped in the colonization of the Cambal, Narmadā, Tāpti and Godāvarī valleys. One may go a step further and identify some of the Aryan or mixed Aryan tribes mentioned in the Purāṇas with the authors of Chalcolithic cultures in the above-mentioned valleys. For all these are tied by common features and differ from valley to valley, according to the pottery fabrics and types. But their basic way of life remains the same." But as already stated, certainty is unattainable in the absence of contemporary written evidence which Sankalia fears "may never be found". The chalcolithic stage thus remains hazy, almost unknown as yet so far as the identity of its actors is concerned.

## LEGENDS

We have legends galore in the epics and the Purāṇas; they centre round Agastya and Rāma, the prince of Ayodhyā; but it is impossible to treat them as history, however interesting they may be from the social and religious points of view and as embodiments of the race-memory relating to far off events. The Agastya legends are in many ways the more interesting and perhaps a wee bit better founded in history as they seem to extend not only to the whole of India but beyond the seas of Indonesia and Indo-China where Agastya worship prevailed in the early centuries of the Christian era. They have been discussed at some length from the standpoint of their historical implication by Poerbatcharka in his *Agastya in den Archipel* and by the present writer in an article "Agastya" in *Tiditschrift voor Indische taal—Land en volken-kunde* (Batavia).<sup>22</sup> Our definite knowledge of the southern speech and culture begins at the earliest only long after the mingling of northern Indo-Aryan influences with them and we have no records earlier than Megasthenes' vague account of the Pāṇḍya Kingdom, the Asokan inscriptions and the short Brāhmī cave inscriptions that follow soon after.

<sup>22</sup> Pp. 471-545, 1936.



## 2



### The Aryan Problem

THE DISCOVERY of the Sanskrit language by western scholars in the eighteenth century was followed by the development of comparative philology based on the study of the relations of that language with the ancient and modern European languages, and as a result of these studies the Aryans or Indo-Europeans as they were called gained great vogue among the historians and linguists of the nineteenth century; an original Indo-European language was postulated as the parent of all the related languages of subsequent times, and often there went with it the hypothesis of a common ancestral race and of a common original habitat. For a time there was a strong tendency to trace to the Aryan all that was good, noble and progressive in human history and civilization. Very soon it was seen that language was a culture trait easily learnt by different groups and that the inference from language to race was a fallacy

against which Max Müller himself, one of the early and powerful protagonists of Indo-European, raised a clear warning which however was not always heeded. But the prestige of the Aryan stood high for a long time as may be seen from Hitler's ideas about the Herrenvolk that added to the momentum of the militarism of the Third Reich.

Basing their arguments on literary evidence of different types some scholars have argued for a very high antiquity for the Veda and for the Vedic Aryans being held to be indigenous to India and not immigrants from outside. Tilak and Jacobi interpreted some Vedic texts as giving astronomical indications of an Arctic Home for the Vedic Aryans and a high antiquity like 6000 or 4000 B.C. for the hymns of the *Rgveda*. Pargiter studied the genealogies and myths in the Purāṇas and evolved a theory of indigenous growth of Aryan civilization and its spread outside from India. Tilak's arguments and conclusions were set forth in his *Origin and the Arctic Home in the Vedas*, and Jacobi's articles are found in German learned periodicals, some of them having been also translated into English in the *Indian Antiquary*. Pargiter set out his theories in the *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*. It is not necessary to go into all this in any detail here as few scholars accept them now as valid, and archaeology has provided much more reliable clues to the probable course of events in the pre-historic period. We may also mention, for the sake of completeness, some other writings which have also rightly fallen into oblivion like A. C. Das's *Rgvedic India* and Oldham's *Sun and Serpent* (1905) as typical examples of what scientific research should not be. It is now more or less generally recognized that Aryans migrated into India some time in the second millennium B.C. and that for the

earliest beginnings of Indo-European it is difficult to get beyond 3000 B.C. Let us begin with the results of modern language studies.

By comparing Sanskrit with related languages two stages in the prehistory of the languages have been established. The different stages in the development of Sanskrit and allied Indian languages are generally divided into Early, Middle and Late or Modern Indo-Aryan. "By comparison of early Indo-Aryan," says Professor Burrow,<sup>1</sup> "with the very closely related Iranian, it is possible to form a fairly accurate idea of the original Indo-Iranian or Aryan language from which both have evolved. By comparing Indo-Aryan and Iranian with the other Indo-European languages, it is possible also to go beyond this, and to reconstruct in general outline the characteristics of the original language from which all these are derived." But it has not been found possible by this method to reconstruct a single original ancestor language such as what Latin is to the romance languages, but we see clearly that the earliest Indo-European we can reach by this method was already deeply split into a series of varying dialects.

### ORIGINAL HOME

There is general agreement now that the original home of Indo-European is to be sought in Europe where we find a concentration of many languages of the family "occupying comparatively restricted areas and already markedly different from each other in the earliest" rather than in Asia where we find "enormous stretches in the occupation of

<sup>1</sup> *The Sanskrit Language*, p. 3.

Indo-Iranian, a single member of the family, and as yet little differentiated," most probably "the result of a late colonial expansion on a vast scale."<sup>2</sup> And about Indo-European itself, we no longer think simply in terms of primitive Indo-European, the line of division being marked chronologically by the migration of Hittites and the separation of their language from the main body of Indo-European, this separation being now taken to have been the earliest movement in the splitting up of Indo-European. This assumption of the early separation of Hittite is the "only way to explain the great differences which exist between it (Hittite) and the type of Indo-European that has been reconstructed from the previously known members of the family."<sup>3</sup> Late Indo-European (that is, after the separation of Hittites) is marked by certain developments in which different dialects evolving in common were gradually beginning to assume the character of different languages.<sup>4</sup>

The original home of Indo-European is now held to have been the central portion of Europe, extending from the Rhine to Central and Southern Russia, and it is considered probable that by the time of the Indo-Iranian migrations the larger part of this area had long been occupied by various Indo-European dialects.<sup>5</sup>

### THE NEAR EAST

The earliest recorded traces<sup>6</sup> of the Aryan peoples after

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> The account in these paragraphs rests on Burrow, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-30.

their dispersion from the original home are now thought to be found not in India nor in Iran, but in the "Near East", in the documents of the Mitanni Kingdom of North Mesopotamia during the period 1500-1300 B.C. We find royal names with a decidedly Aryan look in several cuneiform documents: examples are Sutarna, Parśāstar, Arta Lama, Tusratten, Matiwaza, i.e. respectively in Indo-Aryan Sutarāṇa, Praśāstār, Tīrṣratha (cf. Vedic *tresaratha* having rushing chariots), Mativāja (victorious through prayer). Assyrian private documents contain proper names which can be interpreted as Aryan, such as: Artamna, Bar-daśva, Puruṣa, Bīryaśura, etc. corresponding to IA. R̥tamna (mindful of the law), Vārdhaśva (son of Vṛddhāśva), Puruṣa (man, male), Vīryasūra (hero of valour), etc. In this period Mitanni influence was spread over a wide area and we find principalities with apparently Aryan names as far as Syria and Palestine. The contemporary Hittite kingdom had close relations of peace and war with the Mitanni kingdom, and some documents from the Hittite capital of Boghazkui provide valuable evidence for the presence of Aryans in the Mitanni country. The most interesting among them is a treaty of about 1350 B.C. concluded between the Hittite king Suppiluliuma and the Mitanni king Matiwaza. Among the divinities sworn by in this document there occur four well-known Vedic divine names. They are: Indara, Mitras(il), Nāsatia(nna) Ruvanass(il), which stripped of their non-Aryan terminations are unmistakably the Vedic Indra, Mitra, Nāsatyas and Varuṇa. It is thus clear that not only Aryan language but Aryan religion also closely resembling that of the *R̥gveda* was current in this region in this period. The introduction of the horse to the countries here seems also due mainly to these Aryans. The

Hittite capital has also yielded a treatise on horse-breeding and training written in the Hittite language, but the author, who had charge of the royal horses, was a Mitannian by name Kikkali. And some of the technical terms in the work are clearly Aryan words. These are *aika vartana*, *tera-v*, *panza-v*, *satta-v*, and *navartama* (hapl. for *nava-v*) corresponding to Sanskrit *ekavartana*, one turn (of the course), and likewise for the numbers 3, 5, 7 and 9. The existence of these loan words in the Hittite text shows clearly the priority of the Aryans in this field.

A few Aryan traces are also found among the documents of the Kassite Dynasty of Babylon (c. 1750-1170 B.C.). The Kassites were invaders from the Iranian plateau and their language has no connection with Aryan or Indo-European. Still in a list of god's names with their Babylonian equivalents we get *surias* (rendered *samas*) clearly the same as Sanskrit *Sūrya*. We have also *Maruttas* the war god (rendered *En-urta*), cf. Sanskrit *Marut*, which however always occur in *ṛhw* plural. Among the kings, one has a name apparently Aryan, *Abirattas*, *abhi-ratha*, "facing chariots" (in battle).

The existence of Aryans in this area was unsuspected till the discovery of these Aryan names in cuneiform documents; but now there is no doubt that a sizeable influx of Aryans had taken place in the Near-Eastern scene. The Aryans appear in Mitanni from 1500 B.C. as the ruling dynasty; they must have entered as conquerors as they did in Iran and India. But there was difference in two important respects: (1) they did not succeed, as in Iran, India and elsewhere, in imposing their language on the country they occupied; the native Hurrian remained the language of the country and was adopted by the conquerors,

and it is not known whether the Aryan language was preserved for any length of time apart from proper names and some technical terms; (2) we find no trace of the implacable antagonism between Aryan and non-Aryan so characteristic of the Aryan expansion in India and Iran. In the field of religion in particular, Aryan and local gods appear to have been honoured side by side—a striking contrast to the behaviour of the Vedic peoples.

Linguistically the material is not enough to warrant any far-reaching conclusions and the few phonetic changes observable such as *v* to *b* (*biruna*), and *c* to *z* (*panza*) appear to be local and independent changes. "There is clearly no point," says Burrow, "in arguments as to whether the language is Iranian or Indo-Aryan since there is no evidence of its being either, and we can be pretty sure that if more abundant material turned up, we should discover that we were dealing with a third and independent member of the Indo-Iranian family. It is only the antiquity and conservatism of the Indian tradition, as opposed to the Iranian, that has led scholars to regard these Aryans as specifically Indo-Aryans." (p. 293) The occupation of Near East was completed by 1500 B.C., and the beginning may well have been considerably before this date since the regime seems to be fully and finally established and there is no hint anywhere that the ruling families are newcomers. The direction of the invasion would seem certainly to have been from the North, via the Caucasus.

### SOME EARLIER STUDIES

We may now refer to some relatively early studies on Aryan migrations by way of introduction to the story of

Indo-Aryan and its linguistic and cultural evolution in the historical period. In 1884 Wilhelm Geiger wrote, for that time, a remarkable paper styled "La Civilization des Aryas" (*Le Museon* III). He pointed out that the country south of Lake Baikal is called the land of seven rivers by the Russians. Was this invented by them or borrowed from the indigenous people? On the latter and more probable alternative, the name accompanied the Aryans still united, in their migrations till they separated in Mt Suleiman. The names of these rivers were originally prevalent in the land of the Indo-Iranians, whence some of them at least if not all, were carried into India by the Indo-Aryans and applied to other streams, e.g. Harhavatī (Sarasvatī), and Harayū (Sarayū). The Indo-Iranian country extended from Syr Daria to the south, including Bokhara, Afghanistan and part of Baluchistan to the frontiers of the Panjāb. There was apparently no knowledge of metals or of bronze in the Indo-European epoch; the language of the primitive Aryans has no common words of metallurgy. But the words for melting and tempering are known to the *R̥gveda*—*ayohata* (IX.1.2.) and *dham* and *sanaḍham* (X.72.2; V. 9.5). Aryan arms were only of wood and stone, rarely of metal. According to Schrader, Indo-Germanic (Indo-European) belongs to the stone age; Indo-Iranian to the transition from stone to metal when gold and copper were known, but not silver or zinc and hence no bronze. Silver is called white gold—*rajatam hiranyam* in the *Taittirīya Samhitā* (I.5.1.2.). Indo-Iranian utensils were still largely of stone or wood—*aśvattha*, *udumbara*, *śālmali* being, however, unknown before the Aryans entered India and settled there.

Almost exactly fifty years later, in 1934, Stein published



an important paper under the heading, "Indo-Iranian Borderlands".<sup>7</sup> This was a study in the prehistory of the Indo-Iranians in the light of geography and of recent explorations many of them conducted by Stein himself. He said that *Rgveda* was much fuller on Aryan society than any evidence that archaeology could ever yield, and added: "There could never be any doubt for serious students that these tribes who called themselves Aryans in distinction from the original inhabitants of the land whom they fought and subdued, reached the Indus, the 'Land of the five rivers' beyond it from the West and across the Indo-Iranian border region. We have the clearest evidence of this in the fact that in the territories immediately adjoining the region westwards we find established from the earliest times a population speaking languages derived from that Eastern Iranian tongue which in its oldest form as preserved by the *Avesta*, the sacred Zoroastrian texts, is so closely akin to Vedic Sanskrit as to appear almost like a dialect. It is from the same designation of *Ārya*, as likewise claimed by this population, that the name Iran for the whole country is derived."<sup>8</sup> Again, turning to archaeology, he made some observations which are in conformity with what we have already stated about the Aryans in Western Asia. He said: "Inscriptions recovered from Hittite archives in distant Anatolia have revealed to us that in the seventeenth century B.C. a semi-nomadic people speaking the Vedic tongue and worshipping the chief deities named in the hymns of the *Rgveda* was still training its horses and flocks in the mountains of what is now Kurdis-

<sup>7</sup> *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, pp. 179-202.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

tan. This mention, fully according with what internal evidence could previously be deduced from the development of Vedic literature, has provided us for the first time with a reliable chronological starting point." The discerning reader will not fail to notice that Stein's view of the role of the Aryans in the Near East places a larger emphasis on it and treats it as closer to Indian Vedic civilization than the more recent views of Professor Burrow cited above. There can obviously be no certainty in such questions, but on the whole I am inclined to treat with Burrow the Hittites as the earliest instance of Aryan migration, less influential perhaps because of smaller numbers than the later migrations, amongst which we must include Indo-Iranian, which came in sufficient force to impose the Aryan languages on the occupied territories and virtually drown the pre-Aryan speeches of the earlier inhabitants. The survival in strength to this day of the Dravidian languages in peninsular India should be accounted for in part by the distance of the area involved from the original seat whence the migrations of Indo-Aryans began and partly by the strength in numbers of the pre-Aryan inhabitants of Southern India. To resume Stein's arguments, "Now the discoveries made at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa have established the fact that at least a thousand years before (that time) the time we find Aryans in the Near East, the Indus Valley was already in possession of a settled population which by the influence of its religious beliefs, its arts, and probably its system of writing has already affected the development of the Indo-Aryan civilization of India."<sup>9</sup> Stein thought that the Indus people, though superior in material culture, were

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197-98.

inferior in virility and physical strength; but he made the wise reservation: "What the actual state of civilization prevailing in the Indus Valley was at the time of the Aryan conquest, we cannot expect to learn until sites abandoned much later than Mohenjo Daro have been explored." He suggested also the possibility of a decline before the Aryans came in, a view which discounts the plausible idea put forth by some scholars that the Aryans were the destroyers of the urban civilization of the Indus Valley and that the great warrior-god of the Indo-Aryans, Indra Purandara, was the embodiment of this destructive phase of Aryan expansion into India. Recent excavations seem to point, as already hinted, to a succession of two or more poorer cultures after the decline of Harappa culture and before the rise of Indo-Aryan; they also point to widespread contemporary Chalcolithic cultures prevailing in the rest of India including the Deccan which exhibit some features that seem to link them up with Indo-Aryans in a way that has not yet been fully determined. Lothal, Rangpur, Nevasa, Navda Toli and other sites which fall in the category of "sites abandoned much later than Mohenjo Daro" seem to support this view.

The route of Aryan incoming is indicated, says Stein, by the Avestic name Harhavati for the Arghandab. Arachatos of the Greeks. This tributary of the Helmund passes through the fertile tract of Kandahār; the name is the exact equivalent of Sarasvatī prominent in the *Rgveda*. "It may be doubted whether any of the *Rgveda* passages naming Sarasvatī actually refer to the Harhavati, Arghandab has been assumed for some passages by Professor Hildebrandt. Ordinarily the name Sarasvatī is applied in Vedic hymns, as it is in later Sanskrit literature, to a small river

of sacred fame in the east of the Panjāb, though elsewhere in the hymns it may possibly designate also the Indus. But the relation of the Avestic and Vedic river names is so close as to make it appear probable that we have here a case of that transfer of river names which is of common occurrence from very early times in the *topographis sacra of India*." In the famous hymn R.V. X. 75 in praise of the rivers, "we find mentioned in correct sequence from east to west all the rivers of the Panjāb right up to the borders of Afghanistan. Among these are named together the *Krumu* and *Gomati* corresponding to the present Kurram and Gumal. The mention of these rivers, both comparatively small except when sudden spates fill their beds, suggests such acquaintance with Waziristan and the adjacent valleys drained by them as only a recollection of their prolonged occupation by Aryan tribes of the early Vedic period seems likely to account for. This conclusion is strengthened by the incidental mention in the *Rgveda* of two other rivers of this border region—the *Yāyāvati* and *Hariyūpīyā*. Their identification with the present Zhob and Hariob, the one a tributary of the Gomal and the other of the Kurram, has long ago been recognized and is supported by adequate philological evidence. We may note, by the way, that the identification of Hariyūpīyā with the famous town Harappa and the inferences drawn therefrom on the hostile relations between the Indus Valley people and the invading Aryans fall to the ground as a result of the correct equation of Hariyūpīyā and Hariob.

Stein's conclusions based on linguistics, geography and literature were confirmed with the aid of archaeology by

Robert Heine-Geldern in an article two years later<sup>10</sup> in which he discussed five prehistoric forms of tools, all later than the Indus Valley culture and related to the region from Caucasus to Luristan (c. 1200-1000 B.C.) and was quite sure that two of the tools, the trunnion axe and the axe-adze, had been brought to India by a migration from the South Russian steppes passing through Caucasia and North Persia.<sup>11</sup> He also stressed the fact that the Mitanni Aryans were not a detached branch, but remained in close touch with the main body further north in Armenia, Asia Minor and Transcaucasia; but as we have seen on this matter quite different views have been developed by other scholars subsequently.

#### ROUTE OF MIGRATION

The route of the main Aryan migration to Asia is now conceived slightly differently from what Heine-Geldern thought about it, but in no way incompatible with it. After mentioning the presence of the Aryans in the Near East (Mitanni) as the result of an early and minor break off from the Indo-European homeland, Burrow proceeds to say, "The major migrations, however, took place to the East, North of the Caspian Sea, and resulted in the major portion of the Aryan tribes being concentrated in what is now Russian Turkestan. From there Iranians and Indo-Aryans separately penetrated into Iran and India. It is only at this period that a common Indo-Iranian, albeit with

<sup>10</sup> *JISOA* IV 1936, pp. 87-115, "Archaeological Traces of the Vedic Aryans".

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

dialectal divisions, divides into two branches, Indian and Iranian. The existence of Indo-Aryan as an independent form of speech begins with the entrance of Aryan tribes into India. From this period the two branches evolve in comparative isolation."<sup>12</sup> But at the beginning of their separate evolution, the relations between Vedic and Iranian languages was so close that, as Burrow puts it, "It is quite possible to find verses in the oldest portion of the *Avesta* which simply by phonetic substitutions according to established laws can be turned into intelligible Sanskrit."<sup>13</sup>

"There is some linguistic evidence to show that the Indo-Aryan invasion took place in successive phases, and not in one simultaneous movement." The Kafiri languages of the North-west show features which indicate that they occupy linguistically as well as geographically a place between Indo-Aryan and Iranian, and some of these features can be explained only on the assumption of important dialectal divergences of ancient Aryan at a time preceding the invasion of India and of the migration of Kafiri taking place earlier than the occurrence of certain linguistic developments which are shared alike by Iranian and Indo-Aryan but not by Kafiri. Likewise there are dialectal differences between the Vedic language of the North-west and the later classical language of Madhyadeśa; for instance Vedic turns *l* into *r* while the distinction is preserved in the classical language. The Vedic feature is characteristic of Iranian also. "Clearly the fact that the more easterly dialects of early Indo-Aryan have avoided this change

<sup>12</sup> *Op cit.*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

indicates a comparatively early separation from the main body, in comparison with the Vedic dialect which has undergone this change in common with the rest of Aryan before being introduced into India." In other words the Indo-Aryans of the eastern half of North India must be taken to represent an earlier wave of Aryan immigrants than Vedic Aryans. Lastly, it is wellknown that there is no reference to the original Aryan home or to the migration into India in the hymns of the *Rgveda*. This has often formed the basis of the view that Aryans were indigenous in India and not immigrants from outside. But modern critical scholarship explains this by assuming a considerable interval between the entry of the Aryans into India and the composition of the Vedic hymns, and this view is summed up by Burrow in the following words: "The history of Indo-Aryan begins with the first introduction of Aryan speech into India, but between this event and the composition of the first recorded document of Indo-Aryan, the hymns of the *Rgveda*, a considerable period must have elapsed. This is clear from the fact that in the text of the *Rgveda* itself, although historical allusions are not uncommon, there is no reference anywhere to the fact of the migration, nor any definite indication that it was still remembered. Linguistic reasons also compel us to assume such a period, since the number of linguistic (mainly phonetic) changes that have taken place since the common Indo-Iranian stage is considerable. No doubt the beginning of dialectal cleavage go back to the Indo-Iranian period, but there is no doubt that the bulk of the characteristic changes of Indo-Aryan and Iranian respectively have taken place after the complete separation of the two groups, that is to say, after the Aryan invasion of

India.”<sup>14</sup> I omit the list of changes that follows which is “impressive enough” as Burrow himself puts it.

Besides phonetic changes there were changes in vocabulary of a remarkable nature. There were first of all changes in meaning as a natural occurrence over long periods or sometimes as a result of misunderstanding; thus for instance *vahni* (carrier) came to mean “fire” as Agni, the Fire-God, was the carrier of sacrificial oblations to the Gods. Again, the term *dasyu*, primarily ethnic and applied to non-Aryan inhabitants of India, acquired the meaning of “robber”; likewise *dāsī*, “slave,” was originally a tribal name (cf. *Dahe* of Central Asia), and the same may apply to *śūdra*, member of the fourth caste, since a tribe with this name is mentioned in both ancient Indian and classical sources relating to north-western India. Changes of meaning due to misunderstanding, may be illustrated by *kratu*, “sacrifice”, as opposed to Vedic *kratu*, “wisdom, insight”, which is perhaps no change of meaning so much as failure to understand the proper sense of the Vedic word. In classical Sanskrit *mātariśvan* is “wind”; originally it meant the divine being who discovered fire by the method of rubbing two sticks, and also Agni himself (from *mātāris*, “fire stick”, cf. Lat. matrix). The change of meaning can only be due to the fading of the old mythology in the popular mind. The use of *Kilāla* for “blood” in Sanskrit was also due to a misunderstanding of Vedic *Kilāla* meaning “a certain milk preparation”, cf. Khovar, *Kilāl*, a kind of cheese. False popular etymology is another source of changes including creation of new words. Thus *asura* (demon) and *asita* (black) were falsely taken to begin with

<sup>14</sup> *Op cit.*, pp. 32-33.



the negative particle *a* and gave rise to *sura* (God) and *sita* (white). The growing difficulties of language due to such changes gave rise at an early date to schools of interpretation (*Nirukta*) and lexical collections (*nighaṇṭus*), Yāska being the earliest of the writers of this class accessible to us. As has already been noted the vocabulary was enriched by the adoption of new words from vernacular speech and the exact origin of many of these still remains unknown.

In fact Aryan speech had already made many non-Aryan borrowings before it entered India. Some examples have been pointed for the Indo-Iranian period (by a critic of Przyluski's *Emprunts anaryans in Indo-Iranian*) like: *Kambala*, cf. Ber *bal*; *Godhūma*, cf. Avest. *Gautuma*; *iṣṭaka*, cf. Avest. *istya*; *Nāsatya*, cf. Avest. *Naodhiya*; *makara*, cf. Avest. *Kara*. Likewise some borrowing may have taken place earlier in the Indo-European epoch; it has been pointed out that the Austro-Asiatic names of poison *viṣa/biṣa/misa* (Muṇḍā—*biś*, Khmer—*piś*, Cam. *biḥ*, Indonesian—*bisu*, *visu* was borrowed on three several occasions: (1) in I.E. epoch—Skt. *viṣa*, Lat. *virus*, etc. (2) Indo-Iranian period—Avest. *bis*, remedy, *biśas*—to look after, to cure; Pāli—*bhisa*, Skt. *biṣa*, *viṣa*, etc. (3) More recently by Indo-Aryan speech with prefixes—Skt. *kilbiṣa*, *kalmaṣa*, cf. co-existing Cam. forms like *biḥ*, poison.

## ARYANS IN INDIA

For what happened in India after the Aryan advent we have the well-studied evidence of the Vedic literature and the growing evidence of modern archaeology; the two lines stand somewhat apart just now, and much more ex-

ploration and study would be needed before a satisfactory integration can be achieved. One of the most comprehensive and shrewdest evaluations of the literary evidence is that found in Oldenberg's *Buddha*,<sup>15</sup> particularly the twenty-page excursus on the relative geographical location of Vedic and Buddhist culture.<sup>16</sup> He points out that there was—and could be—no community of culture over the wider area of Aryan territory and peoples in India, and draws attention to parallels from the smaller lands of Greece and Italy after the Aryan advent. He sees evidence of the prevalence of a distinction among the Aryans between the champions of Aryan culture and other Aryans more liberal and eclectic in their outlook. The association of distant emigrants with the pre-Aryan inhabitants in varying stages of development was the most important factor, in the differences that developed, though possibly there were also inherent differences among the different leading groups and types of the Indian Aryan stocks also. Much in this literature reflects the higher and older sacral authority of the western peoples, and the disregard, not to say contempt, for the easterners who derived their instruction from the west. Differences also grew between the north and south which were recorded by Baudhāyana in his *Dharmasūtra*<sup>17</sup> where he notices five differences (*vipratipatti*) between north and south, cross-cousin marriage in the south and sea voyage in the north being among the regional peculiarities. Among the many Vedic tribes named, the Bharatas had a long history and were hailed as

<sup>15</sup> Eng. tr. by Hoey, London, 1882.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 391-411.

<sup>17</sup> I.2.1.4.

the ideal in speech and action.<sup>18</sup> They become increasingly important and isolated, and disappear from later lists found in Manu and Buddhist literature, because they were absorbed in Kuru-Pāñcālas along with their enemies—the Purus; and their sacred land becomes Kurukṣetra. The Kośalas, Magadhas, and Videhas had already pressed forward farther to the east down the Ganges. Vedic culture has not had its home, originally at least, among these stocks of the east, but among peoples of the western group: Janaka's relations to the west were similar to those of Macedon with Athens. Videgha Mathava crossing the Sadānīrā with Agni-vaiśvānara<sup>19</sup> may well signify the advent of Aryan culture in these distant lands.

The different culture regions as they developed ultimately in the late Vedic may be seen reflected in some verses in the *Manusmṛti*<sup>20</sup> which enumerate them thus: (1) Brahmāvarta, the land between the rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī; its hereditary tradition (*pāramparyakramāgatācūra*) furnished the standard of propriety (*sadācāra*);<sup>21</sup> (2) Brahmarṣideśa, comprising Kuru, Matsya, Pāñcāla and Śūrasena, and adjacent to Brahmāvarta; all men should learn conduct (*svam svam caritram*) from the Brāhmaṇas (*agrajanmānaḥ*) of this area;<sup>22</sup> (3) Madhyadeśa, land between the Himalāyas and the Vindhya, east of the Vināśana and west of Prayāga;<sup>23</sup> (4) Āryāvarta, a name of wider import, applied to the whole area between the two moun-

<sup>18</sup> *Att.*, III. 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Sat. Br.*, I.4.1. 10ff.

<sup>20</sup> ii. 17-23.

<sup>21</sup> vv. 17-18.

<sup>22</sup> vv. 19-20.

<sup>23</sup> v. 21.

tains named above the eastern and western seas (22). It should be noticed that the first three divisions are more specific than the fourth which is more general, not to say vague; it may not be wrong to suppose that the three represent divisions that were current in the later Vedic age when the aryanization of North India was in its early stages, and peculiarities of particular regions well-marked. The fourth name Āryāvarta must be taken to reflect the more widespread and general influence of Aryan culture in the rest of North India which had perhaps advanced to a perceptible extent by the time the *Manusmṛiti* was composed, some time between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D. (the date suggested by Bühler). It is interesting to note that Medhātithi, the earliest extant commentator on Manu, by whose time the Muslim inroads had begun and Sind had passed under Arab rule, and many earlier foreign inroads by the Greeks, Śakas, Pahlavas and Kuṣāṇas had taken place with their concomitant vicissitudes, political and social, Medhātithi interprets Āryāvarta in an interesting manner. He says *Āryā avartanta iti Āryāvarta*, meaning the land where Āryas keep constantly recurring, and explains it further by saying that though this land may often pass temporarily under *mleccha* occupation it is as often redeemed by the reappearance of Āryas. This is, for his time, a remarkable recognition of the persistence of Aryan culture as the major constituent of Indian culture even after all the tumults and confusions of a long history. This is not all. Manu adds a fifth category to his account and mentions this: (5) *yañīya* country, land where sacrifices may be performed, comprises all the land where the black deer (*Kṛṣṇasāra mṛga*) flourishes naturally, the rest being *mleccha* deśa (23). One

wonders if this definition is confined to India or may be taken to extend to other lands; at any rate we know now that Vedic sacrifices were performed in the fourth century A.D. in distant Borneo, as recorded in the Yūpa inscriptions of Mūlavarman, and it seems quite possible that the author of this verse had in his mind the overseas lands where Indo-Aryan culture was beginning to make its mark in the early centuries B.C. and A.D.

### THE SHUDRAS

Were the Sūdras Aryans or non-Aryans? The evidence of the *Puruṣasūkta* apparently gives them a place in Aryan society by giving them an origin coeval with that of the three twice-born varṇas, each varṇa being said to be or emerge from the different parts of the body of the cosmic Puruṣa. But this is not conclusive, for this hymn occurs in the tenth book and is held to be relatively late both in its language and content. It is therefore possible to suggest that Aryan society proper comprised only three varṇas before the advent of the Aryans into India, and that the Sūdras were added on as the fourth varṇa in India to find a place for the pre-Aryan inhabitants of the land in an integrated society. This view is supported by two facts. First, there is no parallel to the Sūdra in Iranian society, while the other three varṇas have their counterparts. And secondly, Indo-Aryan literature reflects a deep-seated prejudice against the Sūdras, which may well be the relic of the cultural and "racial" antagonisms of the period of the Aryan advent. Manu's code is typical of the orthodox Hindu outlook. It regards him as the lowest born and lays down savage punishments for offences com-

mitted by him,<sup>24</sup> while the other classes are let off more lightly. He can never qualify to give advice in matters of state to the king.<sup>25</sup> He can be employed for menial work by the higher classes, particularly Brahmins, for he was created by Brahmā just for such work. He cannot get rid of his serfdom (*dāśya*) even though he is freed by his master, because it is inborn to him;<sup>26</sup> he has no right to property, and whatever is his can be appropriated with impunity by others, particularly Brahmins.<sup>27</sup>

In Indo-Aryan society, the tendency may have been strong at first to draw a line between Aryans and pre-Aryans of all sorts, though the line was being blurred all the time by the facts of life which perhaps included numberless intermarriages between people on either side of the line, and the name *Śūdra* may have been bestowed generally on all sections of the population that were not demonstrably Aryan. A distinction is made sometimes in Vedic literature between the *Āryavarna* and *Dāsavarna*, and this renders plausible the view that all groups belonging to the *Dāsa* varṇa came to be designated *Śūdras* in later parlance. The origin of the name is obscure, and it has been held that it was originally the proper name of non-Aryan chieftain which was extended in its application; the classical writers of the time of Alexander's invasion and the *Mahābhārata* mention the presence of a republican clan of *Śūdras* in the Indus valley.<sup>28</sup> It is perhaps worth noticing also that Yāska in his *Nirukta* (III 8)

<sup>24</sup> viii. 270 ff.

<sup>25</sup> viii. 20.

<sup>26</sup> viii. 413-14.

<sup>27</sup> iv. 417.

<sup>28</sup> Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, Bangalore, 1943, pp. 154-55.

says the following in explanation of the well-known Vedic expression *pañcajanaḥ: Gandharvāḥ pitaro devā asurā rakṣāmsītyeke catvāro varṇaḥ niṣṇādāḥ pancamā ityaupamanyavaḥ*; which L. Sarup translates as: "According to some (the five tribes) are the gandharvas, the manes, gods, demons and evil spirits. They are the four castes with niṣāda as the fifth, says Aupamanyava." The second explanation is interesting as the oldest evidence of the grouping of all people outside the pale (of the varṇa system) perhaps all aborigines, as Niṣādas or *pañcamas*—a title to which untouchability was attached either then or at a later stage of social evolution. It has now been statutorily abolished since Independence and Gandhi attached the utmost importance to this reform.

Neither the racial nor the cultural history of the period of the formation of Indo-Aryan society is as clear as we would wish, and clear and definite conclusions are not easy to formulate. A. B. Keith has pointed out<sup>29</sup> for instance: "It is natural to regard the Dravidians as ultimately not essentially different from the pre-Dravidians or even the Negritos, but all these views rest on insufficient grounds." He also rejects Chanda's attempt<sup>30</sup> to treat Śūdras as Aryans and deny their aboriginal character, though he admits that they may have, of course, included Aryan slaves. The well-known declaration in the *Gītā* that God created the four varṇas on the basis of inherent qualities and occupations (*cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa-karma vibhāgaśaḥ*), it should be noted, still reflects a fluid social order in which heredity had not come to play the

<sup>29</sup> *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda*, p. 634, n. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Indo-Aryan Races*, i. 74 ff.

dominant role in the determination of status; but even this conclusion may be valid only in theory, because we have much fairly early evidence regarding hereditary castes and occupations (jātis). Vincent Smith<sup>31</sup> stressed the distinction between Varṇa, "class" or "order" and jāti, "caste", and averred that "the compiler of the *Institutes of Manu* was well aware of the distinction between varṇa and jāti"; this may, however, be doubted as the two terms are used interchangeably not only in the context he has mentioned, but elsewhere also both by text writers and commentators. But he was perhaps right in his further statement:<sup>32</sup> "Separate castes existed from an early date. Their relations to one another remained unaffected whether they are grouped theoretically under four occupational headings or not." The origin and history of caste in India is indeed one of the most vexed questions and has gathered a great volume of controversial literature round itself. Perhaps the best among recent studies is that by Hutton who was census commissioner in 1931, and his main thesis that the caste system is the product of the mingling of Aryan and pre-Aryan social institutions and beliefs seems the best we can formulate. Our ancestors were remarkably successful not only in integrating diversities of various kinds and at different levels, but also in covering up their tracks by myths and legends. The omission of a historical record seems almost deliberate.

<sup>31</sup> *Oxford History*, p. 63.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.



### 3



## The Aryanization of India

NO ONE doubts that there was much mixing of the Aryans with the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India, but in the resulting culture the dominant note was that of the Aryans whose language generally displaced the pre-existing languages and who by their superior martial equipment due to the use of the horse (and possibly of iron also) imposed themselves as rulers wherever they went. This process used to be called Aryanization, but in recent years some anthropologists have suggested the name "Sanskritization" though others have been very critical of the new term. Perhaps we may retain the old term, but note that this has been a continuing process through the centuries and the census reports of recent decades reveal the persistence of the process even in modern times. But our concern primarily is with the beginning of the process.

This movement seems at first to have proceeded in

Northern India from the northwest to the southeast, and perhaps somewhat later from the north to the south into the Deccan across the Vindhya. We may not try to depict the early results of the process as seen in the religious and social set up in the late Vedic period as we may roughly put it. One of the recent attempts to portray this set up is that of the German scholar Hauer in his *Glaubengeschichte der Indogermanen I* (1932). His earlier book on the Vrātyas is more definitely a work of pure scholarship which gives excellent proof of his intimate knowledge of the Vedic texts; but the work I have just mentioned, while it is wider in its scope, is marred by his perhaps enforced loyalty to Nazism; it hails Hitler as the modern *avatār* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Though it is perhaps strongly tinged with the doctrine of the Herrenvolk, still the analysis of the Indo-Aryan social and religious set up in Northern India is not without interest to us. He presents a picture which has much plausibility, though it is perhaps not unexceptionable in all its details. He says that the Madhyadeśa was between Gangā and Yamunā, and west of it was the orthodox area. The North, Northeast and East, and perhaps the Northwest, also were different; here the non-orthodox Rudra-Śiva worship grew and the Vrātyas were at home, but in close contact with Brahminism. The Vrātyas were perhaps the earliest immigrants pushed to the East and the Himalayas by the later Aryan immigrants. We shall come back to the Vrātyas presently. To the Southwest was a third region, the home of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. We must note however that indigenous tradition locates the home of Kṛṣṇa in the Yamunā valley round about Mathurā and Brindāvan, and the southwest, according to this tradition, Dvārakā enters into Kṛṣṇa's life at a relatively

late stage. But to continue Hauer's exposition. He suggests, possibly in tune with the current notions in Nazi Germany about Herrenvolk, that the Aryan noble held his court and led his independent life ruling over all Indo-Aryan territory. But he admits that there was plenty of mutual intercourse and influence between the Aryans and the non-Aryans.

Like many others, Hauer also points out that these contacts produced notable changes in religious thought and practices and created a new philosophy as seen from the corpus of the upaniṣads. Belief in an inner being, called Ātman by some and Puruṣa by others became common, and one of the most notable effects of the new lore was to antiquate the old ritualism and apply its notions to the processes of life and make sacraments of them. See for instance passages in the *Çhāndogya Upaniṣad* like *Puruṣo vāva yajñah*<sup>1</sup> and *puruṣo vāva Gautama Agniḥ. yoṣā vāva Gautama Agniḥ*<sup>2</sup> and many others of the same type. By the side of this identification of life processes with ritualism, there was also an attempt to pour contempt on ritualism (e.g. *plavā hyete adraḍhā yajñarūpah—Munḍaka* 1.2.7) accompanied by the call to a higher life of meditation and contemplation. The new message is one of peace and unity, an experience which is summed up in the famous phrase, *tat tvam asi*—the identity between the soul of the individual and of the universe. This mystical and metaphysical trend began, according to Hauer, among the Sāmagas having a Vrātya origin according to the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, in which the *Kena*

<sup>1</sup> iii. 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> v. 8.

*Upaniṣad* is embedded as is well known. The common view regarding these developments ascribes them either to the impact of pre-Aryan faiths and practices, among which yoga is often included, on the Aryan, or to the advances which the warrior class of Kṣatriyas made over the Brahmins in the field of philosophical speculation. Neither of these alternatives can be demonstrated with adequate proofs; though there are instances of Kṣatriya philosophers like Janaka there is little to support the postulate of a monopoly of philosophic thought among them; many Brahmin teachers are equally prominent and instances of prominent non-Aryan leaders being instructed by them are quite common.

Hauer holds that the idea of the soul and that of the one High God were already known to the Aryans before they came to India. The divinity of the soul occupies, according to him, an important place in all early Indo-Germanic documents, and in no other system does it occupy so central a position as in this. He also stresses the common character of all human religious development instanced by the place of the High God (Hoch-gott) in many primitive religions. He also contrasts Semitic monotheism and the idea of law as God's will with the Indo-German concept of *Rta*, eternal law, and the *do ut des* (reciprocity) of the *yajña*, sacrifice (offer). The Indo-Aryan Vasiṣṭha and the Iranian Zarathushtra are examples of the prophetic theistic phase of development. The Indo-Germanic God does not speak in thunder like Jehovah, but Vasiṣṭha travels with God in a heavenly boat, and Zarathushtra questions Ahura Mazda face-to-face. Hauer also stresses the conservative innovationism and the organic character of Indo-German development in general; the mythical phase is

never altogether lost. This sense of wholeness and organic growth governs the attitude to other religions, a trend crystallized in the relatively late statement of the Lord in the *Gītā*: *ye yathā mām prapadyante tāmstathaiva bhajāmyaham*. A Cyrus or Aśoka is of world significance.

Keith has suggested<sup>3</sup> that differences of beliefs existed among the Indo-Aryan tribes themselves and that we need not assume that accusations of being without gods, without sacrifice, without Indra, necessarily always apply to non-Aryan foes. It has become difficult to trace these differences clearly "with the available material in which local and tribal distinctions have been largely removed by syncretism." Nevertheless he suggests that the eclipse of Varuṇa, a highly moral deity earlier, and the rise of the war-God Indra in the *Rgveda* is significant in the history of Indian religion, as also the rise of Agni, the God of the sacrifice and of the sacrificial priest, and of Prajāpati, the embodiment of the more reflective section of the priesthood. In these changes Keith sees the effects of the admixture of races in India which was, among other things, fatal to the conception of Varuṇa.<sup>4</sup>

### THE VRAATYAS

At this point we may stop to consider in some detail the problem of the Vrātyas which, as already stated, has been studied in a scholarly (pre-Nazi) monograph by Hauer. The views on the Vrātyas contained in the traditional literature of India are clear evidence that their true origin

<sup>3</sup> *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-02.

and role had fallen into oblivion relatively early. The explanation of Vrātyas as the class of persons who by long neglect of ritual practices had fallen out of the Aryan fold (*patitasāvitrikas*) is a relatively recent surmise of the commentators on Smṛtis (law-books). Even the statement in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*<sup>5</sup> that Vrātyas resulted from mixed unions among different caste—*Varṇasamkarād utpannān Vrātyān ahūr manīṣiṇaḥ*—is, in spite of its early date, only a bad guess. The Vrātyastoma is described at some length in the *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*<sup>6</sup> and this is regarded as a ritual for enabling Vrātyas to enter the Aryan fold in early historical times. Weber thought this a ceremony for the conversion of non-Brahmin Āryas to Brahminism; he also thought that the red garment of the Vrātya was that of the Buddhist monk and identified Vrātya and Arhat; he also thought that Vrātyas represented some primitive religious practices, and put forward the daring suggestion that the *Atharvaveda* was the Veda of the Vrātyas as many Vrātya documents are best preserved in it. Much more to the point is his guess that *Atharvaveda* XV is a glorification of *upanayana*, initiation, i.e. the entry in Aryan fold as against Vrātya. The St Petersburg Lexicon (1871) defined Vrātya as “belonging to a roving band, a vagabond; united in a band which stood outside the Brahmanical order, and held that AV XV was an idealizing of pious vagrants or mendicants.” Charpentier<sup>7</sup> in his *Rudra-Śiva* stressed the difficulty arising out of Vrātya meaning heretic and god at the same

<sup>5</sup> I.9-15.

<sup>6</sup> XVII.1-40.

<sup>7</sup> WZKM., 1909, pp. 151 ff.

time, and treated Vrātyas as worshippers of Śiva—AV XV being praise of Śiva and his earthly followers, the pious mendicants. In 1924-5 Kshetreschandra Chattopadhyaya rightly pointed out that AV XV has nothing to do with Vrātyastoma, but a mystic Vrātya life. About the same time Winternitz called Vrātyas robber herdsmen, first outside the pale of Brahmanical culture, and later admitted into it by gradual propaganda. But the Brahmins are not known at any time to have admitted such folk into their circle, and on the whole there is more to be said for Weber's old conclusion that Vrātyas were Aryans.

There are other texts outside the *Atharvaveda*, which Radhabinod Pal<sup>8</sup> sums up as follows: "We are told of Vrātyas in a disparaging tone. These Vrātyas are included in a list of victims at the Puraṣamedha in the *Yajurveda*, where however no further explanation of the name is given. Fuller information is furnished in the *Atharvaveda* which describes at length a certain rite intended for the use of the Vrātyas. These were treated as outcastes, the *hīna*. As has been pointed out by Professor Macdonell and Keith, they were Aryans outside the sphere of Brahmin culture already developing. They are said not to practise agriculture or commerce or to observe the rites of *brahmacharya*. They were, however, allowed to become members of the brahmanical community by performance of the ritual prescribed." (p. 332) The Vrātya leader (*grhapati*) bore an elaborate equipment on his person—turban, black robes, a wagon (*viputha*) a *pratoda* and so on. Vedic vrātyas were apparently a society of primitive

<sup>8</sup> *History of Hindu Law*, Tagore Law Lectures, 1929, Calcutta, 1958.

priests wandering in the land, and received in Brahmanical society after conversion. The attendants of Vrātyas such as Māgadha, *pumścalī* (a harlot) and so on show them to be leaders in the relics of an orgiastic tribe that practised rites founded on the holy *maithuna*—thus Māgadha is a wandering musician and *pumścalū* the prototype of the *devadāsī*. Rites of the *mahāvratā* including a phallic dialogue between a *Brahmacārin* and a *pumścal* followed by ceremonial copulation, show that primitive magic became a *vratā* described as *amedhya* (impure) in the developed ceremonial; it perhaps found entry with the Vrātya, and therefore called “out of use” in the *Śāṅkhyāna Śrauta Sūtra*.<sup>9</sup> But the unconverted Vrātyas seem to have kept, their usages and are described in the *Tāṇḍya* statements: *aduruktavākyaṃ duruktam āhuḥ; adīkṣitam dīkṣitavācam vadanti* and so on.

There are two ways in which Vrātya can be derived from *Vratā* (vow) and from *Vrāta* (group). Outside the *Ṛgveda*, *Vrātya* occurs only in the *Atharvaveda*, *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (Keith), and *Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa*—thus either in the oldest layer or in writings not without a tinge of heresy. *Varuṇasya Vrāta*, etc. in the *Ṛgveda* means bound by a vow to god Varuṇa, etc., and this is the earlier phase. Later where Rudra is dominant, *Vrāta* occurs along with *Gaṇa*—the latter explained as *devānucara bhūtaviśeṣaḥ*. The *Kuntāpa sūktas*, *Atharvaveda* XX. 127-36, are closely related to the Mahāvratā and the old Vedic traditions; e.g. 129-32 contain only beginnings of lost verses of an aśvamedha rite; 134 likewise of the maidens’ water dance in the Mahāvratā. These *sūktas* were the hymn

<sup>9</sup> XVII. 6-2.



book of the Vrātyas, who had also a primitive horse-sacrifice. Vrātyas were thus the earliest Aryan arrivals in India who found their way east to Magadha, but kept on an early Aryan rite.

The extraordinary holiness of the Mahāvratā was perhaps due to the central place it held in the pre-Brahmanic epoch, and its deposition from that place later by the Soma sacrifice was duly followed by its total disappearance; but relics of the old rites survived in Śivarātri, Holī, Maidens' water dance [*Malabar Gaz.* I. 184(1908)]. The philosophy of Puruṣa in an undeveloped form was part of the secret lore of the Mahāvratā—cf. *daihika puruṣa*.<sup>10</sup>

The Mahāvratā in its essentials, according to Hauer, goes back to the Indo-Germanic period. For instance, the magic ceremonials with the breath (*prāṇas*—at first three in number, two being added later) can be no innovations, nor the Vegetarian magic, water dance, swing songs like Bṛhat and Ratnantara already raised in the *Ṛgveda* to the position of supernatural powers. The weightiest parts of the later speculations are rooted thus in a vrātya cult dating from before the *Ṛgveda*.

Something may now be said about the concept of Eka-vrātya and Ekaṛṣi. The Ekavrātya is either the Wind God or Rudra Īśāna.<sup>11</sup> The initiate holds parley with God, with whose being his own is closely bound up. The Vrātya was identified with the ur-principle of all divine might—Mahādeva. *Praśna Upaniṣad* (II.11) identifies *prāṇa*, Vrātya and Ekaṛṣi and seems to stand in the tune of the Vrātya lore of theistic mysticism:

<sup>10</sup> *Att. Ar.*, III. 2.3 and AV XV. 7; and about ātmaḥ *Att. Ar.*, III. 3.2. <sup>11</sup> Jain u. Br. III. 21.

*Vrātyastvam prāṇaikarṣirattā viśvasya satpatiḥ*  
*Vayam ādyasya dātarāḥ pita tvam mātāriśvanaḥ*  
 (cf. AV X.7.14)

Ekavrātya and Ekarṣi are parallel figures, essentially similar which have merged in the course of development; both were priest-seers at the start, with this difference that Ekavrātya is a figure with much sharper outlines (AV XV.1) holding a central place in a definite cult, which duly leads to the growth of the Puruṣa as all ruling power.

In the *Upaniṣads* *prāṇa*, the urnacht of the Mahāvraata, and Rudra Śiva are worshipped as the highest gods. Here, according to Hauer, are two religious worlds—the Brāhmaṇa (in the narrow sense represented by the *Śatapatha*), and the non-Brāhmaṇa of which the *te deum* is the Śata rudrīya, united with each other, i.e. Ekavrātya and Ekarṣi.

In this connection, we must also take account of the divinization and astralization of ṛṣis—the Great Bear, and Buddha as Mercury. Kaśyapas, prominent among the divinized Ṛṣis was called *svayambhū*, and hence became a prajāpati in later times. From his name has grown by false etymology (Kurl, Kurme—*Śat. Br.* VII.5.1. ff) the entire myth of Kacçapa (tortoise) culminating in the Pūraṇic Kūrmāvatāra.

Another feature: *Keśin*, brahmacārin and other types of holy persons raised to the level of cosmic powers (RV X. 136 for Keśin or muni. The Keśin is cosmogonic power and his experience has cosmic range; his company with divine powers is of a wild ecstatic kind, and he is All. He is the friend in need of men and gods. Brahmacārin is a concrete type with some features of the *Keśin* (AV X.5).

The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* stands in close relation to

the converted Vrātyas and sets out to find a place for the Vrātya in the Vedic pantheon. We have another Vrātya tradition in leader Buddha and Baudhāyana of which the *Taittirīya Samhitā* knows something.

The heavenly Vrātya is not acknowledged elsewhere in Vedic literature. This bespeaks an opposition of later orthodoxy to the Vrātyas who perhaps still had their own rites while the orthodox *soma* sacrifice was not acknowledged by them as the central mystery. But on the conversion of some Vrātya leaders to the orthodox rite, the heavenly Vrātya may have come into the Vedic pantheon and the groups pertaining to him like Vasus, Sādhyas, etc. and their leader Rudra forced their way in after losing their Vrātya names. Rudra was among the last to be recognized before the final synthesis reflected in the *Upaniṣads*.

#### SYNTHESIS OF BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

No one doubts that with the mixture of Aryan and pre-Aryan peoples in India, their beliefs and practices also mingled and brought about new developments which were very different from the originals which entered the mixture and which obscured the exact identity of the originals. After about a century of continuous study and scholarship, a consensus emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century on the most probable line of religious and philosophical development in Vedic India and this is represented in a work like Keith's *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda*. The different successive stages according to this view may be summed up somewhat as in the following phrases: nature-worship and polytheism, henotheism side by side with or preparatory to monotheism, ritualism,

reaction against ritualism, and the development of Upaniṣadic philosophy with features of pre-Aryan origin. The doctrines of Karma and transmigration make their first appearance in the *Upaniṣads*, and opinion is divided about how far these doctrines were Aryan or non-Aryan in origin and inspiration. We have seen that according to some authors (Hauer in particular) the ideas of soul and of High God are of great antiquity and go back to the Indo-Germanic period.

In recent decades there has been a strong tendency among some scholars to lay increasing stress on the pre- and non-Aryan elements in the historic civilization of India, and some of them, particularly the late Rev. Fr H. Heras, have insisted on designating them Dravidian. Fr Heras sets forth his views in the Introduction to *Mystic Teachings of the Haridāsas of Karnatak* by A. P. Karmarkar and N. B. Kalamdani (1939). According to the learned Father, *Ṛgveda* is "anti-philosophic" and "devoid" of any ascetic ideals, it is wholly materialistic; he cites in his support, "Is Indra existing? Who has seen him!"<sup>12</sup> He asserts that the idea of *prajāpati* is the "evident effect of a totally foreign influence on the doctrines of the *Ṛgveda*, an influence which undoubtedly hails from the Dravidian peoples of the country whose theological doctrine was monotheistic." According to him the significant statement, *Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*<sup>13</sup> is a relatively late interpretation. The *Puruṣasūkta*, says Heras, embodies a materialistic pantheism arising out of a fusion of materialism and multiplicity of gods with a foreign unitarian influence. Five

<sup>12</sup> RV II.15.5 and III.100.3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 164-46.

new ideas animate this outlook and the reaction against ritualism was their effect and not cause. The new ideas were: Ātman, Karman, transmigration, revelation of God to man, and asceticism.

All questions of origin are very difficult of precise determination and it is common knowledge that the new ideas here exclusively traced by Fr Heras to Dravidian origins have been ascribed to other sources or to the natural results of interaction between Aryan and pre-Aryan concepts and practices in general. And his suggestion that monotheistic texts in the *Ṛgveda* are late interpolations is an easy but unconvincing way out of a real difficulty. It is neither possible nor necessary to discuss the genesis of the so-called five new ideas at any great length, but the complexity of the issues involved may be illustrated by a brief consideration of the first and perhaps most important of these ideas, that of Ātman. Heras says that this word comes from *atam*—*āṇ*, meaning lord of the underworld, and argues that this word while passing into Sanskrit lost the second short *ā*, and by a natural reaction lengthened the first *a* and became *ātman* (p. xxiii). He does not explain how *āṇ* became *an*, the first long vowel becoming short and the second palatal becoming a dental; further the word *atam* is not a Dravidian word as Heras seems to think: the *Tamīl Lexicon* derives it from Skt. *adhas*, below. And it is well known that, as Hauer has pointed out, Ātman meaning self is very common in the *Ṛgveda* and is derived from *man* to think or to function with *t* prefix indicating the third person singular.

Heras goes further and interprets the famous *mahāvākya*, viz. *tat tvam asi* not as affirming the identity of the individual soul with universal, but as affirming the

independent self-subsistence of God and avers that this is what Sāṅkara shows also! According to him *tvam* does not refer to Svetaketu but "thou"—the subject of the sentence being God, as the pure absolute subject; the predication that the absolute subject is the absolute object is only subsisting, knowledge itself and the subject of His knowledge (xxvi). We can only observe that this interpretation is paralleled only by another of Heras's in which he held that to the *advaita* philosophy there is no distinction between truth and falsehood and therefore the saints of Sringeri made no bones about forging copper-plate grants endowing their monastery with large properties (see his Mysore Lectures on the "Origin of Vijayanagara").

He also argues that the exaltation of the second *āśrama* (*gr̥hastha*) is Aryan while that of the last *āśrama* (*sannyāsa*) is Dravidian, perhaps implying that the Aryans were more material in their outlook and the Dravidians more spiritual.

## 4



## Social and Religious Synthesis in South India

TURNING TO the south of the Vindhyas, we lack the evidence even more than for the north, which would help us visualize the reactions between Aryan and pre-Aryan cultures. (We get a stray glimpse from Buddhist books which refer to Bāvari and his pupils at Pratiṣṭhāna in Mūlaka on the banks of the upper Godāvārī and their visits to the North via Māhiṣmatī and Ujjayinī.) The grammarian Katyāyana (fourth century B.C.) knows the three Tamil kingdoms of Pāṇḍya, Cera, and Cola, and about the same time Kauṭilya mentions the southern trade route as more valuable to the people of the Ganges valley than the northern routes leading to the Himalayan states, for in his view though the northern region had the advantage in blankets, skins and horses, much other valuable merchan-

dise like conch-shells, diamonds, jewels, pearls and gold was more plentiful in the south. He also mentions the excellent cotton fabrics from Madura and other places in the south. In the earliest stratum of Tamil literature, the oldest accessible in any Dravidian language, which can be placed on good grounds in the early centuries A.D., we find evidence that the mingling of cultures and the Sanskritization of the South has gone very far indeed. This literature mentions clearly the Vedic sacrifices performed by kings and chieftains with the assistance of Brahmins, the Vedic gods Indra and Varuṇa, besides other deities like Śiva, Viṣṇu, Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa, and other members of the relatively late Purāṇic pantheon, besides several local cults of more or less primitive and universal nature like the worship of streams, trees, hills, crossways, etc. It also knows the epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* quite fully and often makes effective use of this knowledge. And the *Tolkāppiyam*, the grammar not only of the Tamil language but of Tamil life, definitely affirms that the rituals of marriage were established by the Aiyar, i.e. Āryas among the Tamils; accordingly we find that marriages are contracted before the sacred fire as witness and the ceremony of *sthātipaka*, the cooking of food by the bride soon after the marriage is also described. The *grhya sūtras* make no mention of the *tāli*, the ornament-bearing string worn round the neck of women as symbolic of their married status with husbands living; yet it seems to be mentioned in the Sangam poems (e.g. Puram 127), and this may well indicate that the *tāli* was part of some kind of ritual or ceremony of pre-Aryan provenance which became integrated with the Aryan fire ceremony when it was introduced by the Aiyar.



The study of Saigam literature shows unmistakably that Aryan culture was apparently welcome everywhere in the South and that Brahmin ideals were accepted heartily. One poet thinks it is the highest praise he can bestow on a king to say that he did nothing that could hurt the feelings of the Brahmins. We may well say therefore that in the Deccan and far South, as in the North, the advent of the Aryans and their cultural influence laid the real foundation for the historical culture of India as we have known it for about two to three thousand years if not more, and that Aryanization (Sanskritization as some modern anthropologists prefer to call it) was the great divide in the cultural evolution of India North and South. The same is true to a large extent of the lands in South-East Asia, including the Philippines and Indonesia.

But to say this is not to imply that all was smooth-sailing all the time, that there were no differences or even conflicts and that the integration of cultures was altogether smooth and perfect. Everywhere in India and outside, though the indigenous cultures were under for a time before the superior power and influence of the new Aryan culture, in course of time there was a recovery and reassertion of the indigenous elements leading to a reformulation of the cultural milieu. One of the best illustrations of this more or less universal phenomenon comes from outside India, from Java. It is the contrast between the *Rāmāyaṇa* sculptures of Prambanan in Central and in Panataran in East Java; these two sets of sculptures depict often the same scenes in the Rāma saga and the characters portrayed are the same; but while the sculptures in Prambanan (ninth century A.D.) are typically Indian in physiognomy and execution, those at Panataran (thirteenth

century) have become typically Indonesian in these respects and Krom has explained the change, rightly it seems, as due to the resurgence of the submerged Indonesian element. In South India there was never so complete an overthrow of indigenous culture as to lead to the complete submergence of either the language or the culture of the people. The earliest inscriptions though carved in an all-India script (Brāhmī) exhibit significant modifications to suit Tamil phonology, and Prākṛt or Sanskrit never completely replaced the local language, at least in the Tamil country, as it did elsewhere in India and abroad. Tamil held its own and evinced a marvellous capacity for assimilating the incoming culture with the result that we have in the Śaṅgam classics a superb literature of incomparable force and beauty coupled with economy of telling expression.

In later times, however, for reasons that are not quite clear but seem in some way or other to have operated all over India, society became more pronouncedly hierarchical, caste crystallized and proliferated and the Brahmin claimed for himself social prestige and other privileges which roused the anger and envy of the other classes. The *Manusmṛiti* in its present form, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* are studded with numerous passages setting forth the divine rights of the Brahmins and the movement seems to have attained its greatest strength in the age of the Guptas in North India and some centuries later in the South. In mediaeval times in South India there came up rival legends calculated to support the views of rival schools of thought; both admitted that the Vedic seer Agastya was the pioneer of the Aryanization of the Tamil land, but one school held that he was also the creator of

the Tamil language and grammar, and that Tolkāppiyar, whose work on Tamil grammar is the earliest now extant, was the pupil of Agastya; the other denied this and held that Agastya and Tolkāppiyar had quarrelled and were enemies, the work of the latter being altogether independent of the former. This opposition to Aryan influences identified with the Brahmins and with Sanskrit has merged in modern times with the social and political movements of the Justice, D.K. and D.M.K. parties.

For a sober scientific student of India's history and culture, however, South India forms no exception from the rest of this vast country, and its living culture of to-day is no less a blend of Aryan and pre-Aryan elements than elsewhere. And it is perhaps worth noting that the Pallavas played a prominent role from the third and fourth centuries A.D. in the Aryanization of the far South and in the transmission of Indo-Aryan culture to the lands and islands of South-East Asia across the Bay of Bengal.

We may now notice some instances of the pronounced tendency in recent decades to stress the pre-Aryan as against the Aryan elements in Indian culture, and the grotesque results to which it has sometimes led. We have already indicated the fanciful derivation suggested for the word *Ātman* by Fr Heras and its true origin. Another crucial instance is furnished by the word *pūjā* (worship). Vedic religion was aniconic and sacrifice by fire-offerings was its central feature. The worship of images of gods in temples is a relatively later development, and many are inclined to ascribe it to the influence of the pre-Aryans. So attempts have been made to treat *pūjā* as a Dravidian (Tamil) word and two possible derivations have been suggested which are so contradictory as to cancel out each

other. One is to connect it with the words *pū* (flower) and *sey* (do), *pūsai* being an act done with flowers; the other is to connect it with *pūsu* (smear), the act of worship in this case being the smearing on the idol of the blood of the victim (cock, goat or buffalo) sacrificed to it. But two eminent linguists have suggested a much more probable Indo-European derivation for the word, Theime, connects it with *p̄nc parka*, as in (*Madhuparka*), JOR xxvii, translation of ZDMG 1939 pp. 105-23; and even better J. W. Bailey 'Cognates of *pūjā*—*pūj*, *Brahmavidyā* 1961, Jubilee number pp. 1-12. Another instance is *Māyā*, a term of great philosophical import, which is sought to be connected by some with Tamil, *māy*, die or perish, a suggestion based on the *Māyā* doctrine as usually misunderstood and ignoring the original meanings of the word. But *Māyā* is one of the oldest Sanskrit words and the St Petersburg lexicon traced it to *mā* measure; and recently Gonda gave two meanings to *mā*, viz. measure and create (*Studies in the Language of the Veda*, The Hague, 1959). In a review of this book, Professor Burrow suggested that the two meanings were those of two homonymous roots, and pointed out that the correct rendering of the passage from *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, viz. *māyām tu prakṛitim vid-dhi māyinam tu maheshvaram* is: "Know that nature is creation, and that the Great Lord is the wielder of *Māyā*, i.e. the Creator." He also cited Sāyaṇa's derivation of *mātar* (mother) from *mā*, to make, in his commentary on RV I. 160-2. saying: *pitā pālayitrī dyau mātā nirmātā pr̥thvī*. A third instance is the attempt to solve the name of Hanumān, the monkey hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*; a plain Sanskrit word into an absurd Tamil concatenation *āṇ maṇḍi*.

RELIGION

Admittedly the Hindu religion of the historical period is the complex product of the interaction of Indo-Aryan and pre-Aryan beliefs and practices, and it is now virtually impossible to disentangle with confidence the contributions of the different races or cultures to its make up. One of the best efforts to do so is that of Hutton found in para 176 of the *Census of India 1931*, Vol. I (1). In his view the different layers that can be distinguished are the following: The earliest form of religious belief and practice was perhaps that of the Negritos and associated with the *pipal* tree and a phallic fertility cult, both of which were perpetuated by the proto-Australoids who added totemism or at least its basis. Then came the Mediterraneans and Armenoids, Muṇḍā and Mon Khmer with a megalithic culture, life-essence theory, reincarnation and worship of the Great Mother. It is difficult to decide the order or strength of these various elements and ideas. Both Muṇḍā and Mediterranean must have been followed by religious elements from Asia Minor brought *via* Mesopotamia by traders and settlers from the West which superseded the fertility and soul-matter cult by one of personified deities, sacrificial propitiation and a formalized worship, again with phallic elements and such institutions as that of the Devadāsī together with astronomical lore and cultures of the heavenly bodies and priestly institutions. These formed a proto-Hinduism which by its reactions to the imported religion of the Aryan invaders who gained unquestioned social ascendancy resulted in modern Hinduism. Such in more or less rough outline may well have been the development in this sphere. We may now

try and look into some specific details as instances of the complex process of which the full details will perhaps never become clear.

Before entering the details, one preliminary point may be mentioned. Scholars have stressed with much appropriateness the fact that in modern Hinduism only the social elements of Vedic rites have survived like the common people participating in some aspects of religious ceremonies even sacrifices not excepted, marriage ceremonies and so on; even here there has been much syncretism with folk customs like the tying of the *tāli* in marriage which finds no sanction in any old manuals of the ceremonials like the *grhya sūtras*. The point to be noted is that though society was or at least aimed at being Aryan, most of its religion seems to be older and pre-Aryan in its essentials. Historical Hinduism makes its first appearance not in the Panjāb where the Aryan element may have predominated in the Vedic period, but farther east where the chances of a stable equal mixture were greater. "It is quite clear," says Hutton, "that the previous inhabitants of India lived in cities and had a high civilization, probably of W. Asiatic origin, and it is significant that Hinduism is remarkable for the similarity of many of its tenets and practices with those of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia." Śiva, Viṣṇu and Kālī become more important than Indra and his company of old Vedic gods, and they carry any pre- and non-Aryan traits, with some later accretions as in the Kṛṣṇa cycle. It is perhaps worth noting in passing, however, that the Tamil *vin*, sky, cannot account for Viṣṇu, though some contamination with a sky-god is possible as L. V. Ramaswami Aiyar pointed out. It may also be noted that bull and snake cults are common to Mohenjo Daro and Crete,

and are also found widespread, particularly the snake cult, in the rest of India from apparently late prehistoric times.

Hauer in his *Glakbengeschichte* rightly stresses the fact that it is no easy thing to unravel the non-Aryan religious elements in the Rudra concept of later times. He points out that Rudra was originally a good Aryan deity overlaid in course of time with the later mythological accretions gathered together in one of the relatively recent parts of the *Māhābhārata* (XII ch. 285 ff) which also contains the story of the *yajña* of Dakṣa and the Śivasahasra-nāma. There is quite a bright side to Rudra according to Hauer and no un-Aryan trace in such texts as RV. II.33, I.43, (4-6), I.129.3, X.92-9, etc. and there is a clear line of development which leads from this through the AV, and other samhitā texts to the highest philosophical concept of Rudra-Śiva culminating in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. Rudra is also Agni and Asura, a word of good repute originally applied to Indra and Varuṇa also. But this line is not represented in the sacrifice books, which always stress the dark side of Rudra. The earliest Aryan worshippers of Rudra who had settled in India suffered along with the indigenous inhabitants as a result of fresh Aryan inroads and found themselves forced to seek refuge in mountains, forests and the remote parts of the country; in this phase Rudra developed new aspects like that of Paśupati, lord of beasts—a concept perhaps drawn from the Harappan culture, and certain incipient original traits of his—the erotic, ecstatic, gloomy and wild ones—received greater development and emphasis by contact with the eastern peoples as these characteristics agreed with their own (the eastern peoples) vegetation-god and goddesses and rites

relating to them; thus by a law of the attraction of the related, as it were, the lowest levels of early Indo-Aryan faith and practice became united with and strengthened by the original eastern traits. Schroeder (*Arische Religion*) has rightly compared Rudra with Odin, and this parallel has been noticed by others as well, e.g., Otto, Leonard. Again, Megasthenes' Dionysus is surely Rudra-Siva in the form in which eastern influences have shaped the deity. One may compare the youthful Cretan Zeus, also developed doubtless from the Indo-Germanic Ur-Gott along local lines under local influences. Rudra-Ekavrātya belonged to the original Aryan but non-brahmanical culture groups who had their home in the north and east of Madhyadeśa and in Magadha, where Buddhism and Jainism came up later, perhaps not without relation to the heretical Śaivism of the earliest Aryan arrivals who were also the custodians of the Mahāvratā and of a higher wisdom embodied in the tradition of the Puruṣa.

I have cited Hauer's views at some length not because I accept them all, much less because I wish to enter into any criticism of them, but just to show how complex the questions are with which we are concerned here. These views contain many suggestions and hints that may help the student in some ways. I shall now complete the sketch of his views on the subject before proceeding to other topics. The old concept of the good god Rudra keeps on, as already indicated, and culminates in the *Śvetāśvatara*, the high hymn of the One God. There is no *Śvetāśvatara* among the Vedic schools, and the *Śvetāśvataras* were members of a non-Brahmin Vratya Saṅgha. Their *Upaniṣad*, particularly its fifth chapter, is important for Sāṅkhya and yoga tradition of Kapila. It is the great



charter of the old Indian theism of *eka deva* Rudra-Śiva. Indo-Aryan thought is characterized by a polarity between the personal and super-personal, and here the personal occupies the foreground. Another polarity is that between transcendence and immanence developed with wonderful clarity. Immanence has a threefold aspect. God is the world, its creative secret, and its indweller (in man as well); transcendence as substratum of all being (Abgrund alles seines) AV. X. 8 as yet shows no sign of world-weariness as also the older strata of the *Upaniṣads* which discourse often on *amṛtam*. Later on we get the tendency that finds its culmination in the Buddha—*mucyate sarvapāśaiḥ*.

Several new features make their appearance in later Vedic religion which are not found in the religion of the *R̥gveda*, and it is generally a difficult thing to decide how far these new features are the results of a natural development of an internal nature and how far they reflect the results of contacts with the pre-Aryan peoples and cultures. Among the new features, some of the most prominent are the cult of the moon and of snakes, of the *devī* and of *deadāsīs*, phallic symbolism and human sacrifice. The idea of human sacrifice underlines the *Puruṣa-sūkta*, but the *sūkta* is a late hymn and it has been interpreted by some as embodying at least in part some non-Aryan folk-myth of creation. The cult of the moon, on the other hand, gets mixed up with the cult of the sacrificial plant *soma* whose juice is identified with the drink of immortality (*amṛta*) and drunk ceremonially at sacrifices and possibly on other occasions as well, and in this latter respect it has been traced to the earliest Indo-European times (Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*). The other features enumerated above have been traced to pre- and non-Aryan sources both in India

and outside, particularly to lands bordering on the eastern Mediterranean and to Western Asia.

The idea of transmigration and reincarnation of souls is very common in later Vedic literature; but it was unknown to the earlier northern religion in which the dead continue to live underground. Ancestor-worship is another similar trait impossible among nomads who may have introduced creation and thus given it a social cachet. But in fact the question of the disposal of the dead is a tricky one and has been solved in diverse ways under the influence of differing conditions and ideas. The Iranians, for instance, held that fire was sacred and was not to be polluted by contact with the dead body; but the *R̥gveda* has both cremation and burial, and burial has been retained for *san-nyāsis* and children (below two) even after cremation became universal. Holy places have been recognized outside Āryāvarta with non-brahmin priests officiating in some of them. Cow-killing (*Śūlagava*) was practised by the Aryans; but the cow seems to have been cherished by the cattle-loving pre-Aryans; at any rate the sanctity of the cow is unknown to the *R̥gveda*. On the other hand the Sema Nāgas still have something like the *Śūlagava*, killing with a pointed stake and erecting a wooden post with a round top morticed on to it. It is not easy to accept the antithesis suggested by Marshall between bull-worship and cow-worship; both were pre-equine (perhaps pre-iron also) and pre-Aryan in India. And one wonders also if in the stories of Kāliyadamana and Khāṇḍavadahana one may see evidence of an opposition between the snake-cult and the Aryans.

Even pre-Vedic proto-Hinduism may have included beliefs and practices that had come in by trade routes from Asia Minor. The magic element is common to tribal reli-

gion and Hinduism, and some scholars have suggested that the Vedic *Brahma* (mantra or spell) is more or less the same as *mana* (Polynesian) in nature; and they invite attention to the sanctity of the fig tree connected with fertility (through the milk-like sap ?) and with the spirits of the dead over a wide area including Africa, Italy, New Guinea, Assam and the Andamans and suggest that all this may stem from original Negrito traits. The view of soul-matter or life itself as a transferable and material substance is familiar in Indonesia and farther India; it is not unknown in India also. In the *garbhādhāna* ceremony the husband infuses the *darbha* grass in water and pours the water down the wife's nostrils to cause conception; also headhunting before marriage based on this theory is common in Assam and elsewhere. The origin and migration of such practice unknown to demonstrably Aryan sources are problems into which we cannot go in any detail, but they have persisted in many areas of Indo-Aryan occupation and have entered into the composite Indian heritage of modern times. Indecent priapic social customs are seen even now changing under influence of external criticism after a long period of customary survival; instances are Cochin government forbidding obscene songs at Holi, and Mysore and Madras terminating the *devadāsī* system by legislation.

In general we may say that tribal religions in India as we find them today form a sort of surplus material not yet built into the temple of Hinduism to what has already been used. The erection of megalithic monuments to the dead and of *sati* stones commemorating the self-immolation of chaste wives survived long into historical times, and possibly still linger in a few obscure spots of India. The

practice of fixing a *pretasīlā* (stone for the dead) for the performance of obsequies still persists among those who perform funeral rituals in the prescribed manner. All these practices have been interpreted as means of fixing or propitiating harmful and dangerous spirits of the dead, and they seem to represent an inseparable blend of Aryan and non-Aryan. We may also mention the practice of human sacrifices for foundations of important structures like bridges, palaces, and so on, to impart permanence and stability from the soul-matter of the dead; till recently there were scares about children being kidnapped for such purposes in the neighbourhood of such constructions. There is also a whole wide area of little-explored institutions of tribal and semi-tribal society like totemism, witchcraft, hagiolatry and so on which still offer much scope for study, analysis and interpretation.

Vedic religion was aniconic at the start, and even as late as the time of Yāska, sixth or seventh century B.C., the question was still a matter of debate whether gods had human shapes or not, some holding the one view and some the other. Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* has an enigmatic passage in which he says that the Mauryas created images (*arcās*) in their desire for gold (*hiraṇya*); and in the early centuries B.C. and A.D. we get inscriptions and coins mentioning and exhibiting images of Vīras who were worshipped in temples and gods and their symbols employed as devices on coins. Whether representation of deities in human shapes is a natural evolution from discussions like those mentioned by Yāska on a purely Vedic Aryan basis or was influenced by pre- non-Aryan religious beliefs and practices is by no means easy to settle.

It is generally known that almost all the gods of the

modern Hindu polytheistic pantheon have been evolved by the syncretism of features drawn from diverse sources, and the subject has been dealt with at considerable length in several books on Hinduism—one of the latest in the line being *Hindu Polytheism* by Alian Danielou (London, 1963). It is neither possible nor necessary to trace these developments in any detail here. But it is perhaps worthwhile illustrating from one example the complexity of the questions involved. The worship of Kārtikeya, called Murugan in Tamil, is today very common in the Tamil country, and has all but disappeared in Northern India. And the view has often been expressed that this God is a Tamil deity par excellence *ab initio*. But when I started testing the validity of these beliefs, I found a number of surprises, and it now seems clear that this deity is no exception to the general rule and that he is also an originally Indo-Aryan deity overlaid with a number of local and possibly non-Aryan traits in different places. It is true that in the early Śaṅgam literature there are references to a Velan (a name afterwards applied to Murugan also) and his *veriyāḍal* or ecstatic dance; *Velan* literally means “men with a spear”, and the early Tamil references to him lead us to suppose that he was some kind of a priest or Shaman with powers of magic and divination, and he is often mentioned in contexts where he diagnoses the condition of lovestick maidens as possession by Murugan. On the other hand the same literature particularly in one of the Ten Idylls, the *Tirumurugārūppadai*, and in the songs of the *Paripādāl*, contains the entire gamut of the Kārtikeya cycle of mythology—his birth from Śiva and Agni, his six faces and the motherhood of the Kṛttikās and of the wives of the six sages (all except Arundhati, the wife of Vasiṣṭha),

his leadership of the divine hosts in the war against Asuras particularly Jaraka (and the Tamil addition of Sūra, not known to northern sources), and his eternal youth, beauty and other characteristics. One poem in the *Paripāḍal* avers that on the day Murugan espoused the Tamil huntress Valli, his elder wife Devayānā, daughter of Indra, shed such a vast quantity of tears as filled the lake on the hill of Tirupparangunṇam, a hillock near Madura which carries one of the most sacred shrines of the deity. If, on the other hand, we turn to the northern sources we find references to the Kārtikeya mythology which seem surely to carry us far back into Aryan and even Indo-European antiquity. In one of the early *Upaniṣads* he is called Skanda and identified with Sanatkumāra—kumāra may well be the shorter form of this name—the teacher who imparts the *mokṣa mārga* to Nārada (*Chāndogya*, VII. 26). In the *Vana Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* the Skanda mythology is set forth at some length and this account shows that the cycle links up with the myths of the wars between *devas* and *asuras* on the one hand, and with soma or Indu implying both the moon and the sacrificial Soma juice often identified with *amṛta*, nectar or the drink of immortality on the other. Skanda gets Devasenā, the divine army, as his wife after Indra rescues her from a Rākṣasa Keśi whom Devasenā's sister Daityasenā (the army of the anti-gods) loves and accepts as her husband. The connection with Soma takes us back perhaps to an Indo-European past when Madhu (mead) was looked upon as *amṛta*. I have dealt with this complex mythology at some length in a paper on Muruga which I read before the Archaeological Society of South India, some months back and which will appear in due course in the transactions of the society for

1964. But I have said enough here to show that Skanda-Kārtikeya has his roots in the early Indo-Aryan past if not in an earlier time, and the fact that Patañjali mentions his images, and that he is found figured with other companion deities in Kuṣāna coins may also be taken to strengthen the same view. The Śaṅgam classics are relatively later than the other sources I have mentioned above and it seems a safe inference that this God was also taken over by the Tamils from the incoming Aryans though some new features were conferred on him by the usual process of syncretism, such as his identification with Velan and his *veriyāḍal*, and his second wife Valli. All his other traits including his cock banner and peacock mount are found in the northern cycle, though his elephant mount was also perhaps a Tamil accretion. We may in passing note among the efforts to Tamilize original Aryan deities the identification of Korravai with Durgā, the bestowal of Pinnai as another wife on Kṛṣṇa and so on. This highly interesting aspect of religious development which exhibits clearly the mingling of originally distinct cultures to form the modern stream of Hinduism has begun to attract attention and led for instance to a study of the Viṭhobā cult at Pandharpūr.<sup>1</sup> The research on these lines deserves to be pushed much further.

The great lesson learned by the sages of old and broadcast to the world as a result of their contacts with pre-Aryan civilizations in India is the need for mutual understanding and tolerance. This has been well stressed by Alain Danielou when he says in his recent book on *Hindu Polytheism*: "Hinduism, or rather 'eternal religion' (Sanā-

<sup>1</sup> C. A. Delewry, *The Cult of Vithoba*, Poona, 1960.

tana Dharma), as it calls itself, recognizes for each age and each country a new form of revelation and for each man, according to his stage of development, a different path of realization, a different mode of worship, a different morality, different rituals, and different gods."

## CASTE

There remains one fundamental social institution of India which calls for some consideration before this brief sketch of a vast subject is brought to an end: and that is the caste system. Jāti (caste) is obviously different from varṇa (lit. colour; but used for class). Jāti with its hereditary feature and restrictions on inter-dining and inter-marriage is peculiar to India. The proliferation of castes has gone on right through history, and even reformers who wanted to abolish caste succeeded only in founding new castes. The writers of *smṛtis* (law books) have a facile theory that new castes arise by mixed marriages (*varṇa-sankaram*); whatever the element of truth in such a theory during the early stages of India's social history, the idea ceased to be valid several tens of centuries ago, and we know that new castes come into existence owing to a multiplicity of practical considerations, or mode of dressing the hair or clothes and what not. There has come up a great volume of literature which discusses the problems involved—generally without reaching final or clear results—and I have no great hope that the present discussion will succeed where others have failed.

There can be no doubt that the differing physical characteristics of different peoples, called "races" at one time, had much to do with the origin of the system, but pre-



historic craniology in India is in a poor way, and there is even no indication that the Mohenjo Daro skeletons are of equal antiquity with their surroundings.<sup>2</sup> Ādiccanallūr and some other places in South India, Sialkot, Bayana (near Agra) and Nāl in Baluchistan are some of the other sites that have been studied. Though it is possible to differentiate Negroid, proto-australoid and Mediterranean and Alpine and other elements, they are by no means easily correlated to the castes as we know them. And the physical material for most of the Indian population seems to have been present in the Indus Valley at an early date.

The separatist principle has become basic to the historical Hindu society as we know it, and it is by no means easy to say if it is Aryan or non-Aryan in origin. Only the fact that this divine principle in its extreme form occurs only in India, while it is unknown in other countries which owe their historic civilization to the advent of the Aryans, points to the inference that it was perhaps basically pre- and non-Aryan. Two factors have contributed to the proliferation of caste right through history: the conservatism of groups is one, and tolerance of differences and the policy of live and let live, another. And the restrictions on dining and marriage have multiplied with the growth of the system. It is only in quite recent times that the impact of the West has brought in notions of social democracy among others, and to the progressive industrialization and urbanization the old barriers are beginning to yield; though the change is yet not on a sufficiently large scale, there can be no doubt that the future lies with it.

The institution of marriage in its relation to caste has

<sup>2</sup> *Census Report*, 1931, I, p. 444.

naturally evoked much attention and study, and without attempting any detailed or comprehensive study of this question, I shall just seek to illustrate the issues involved by citing one example furnished by a very suggestive book and the criticism it has evoked. The book I have in mind is S. V. Karandikar's *Hindu Exogamy* (Taraporevala, Bombay, 1929). The author has argued that gotra or sept exogamy was unknown to Indo-Europeans, and even to Indo-Iranians. It is a later and very rigid development (that is, in India) on two lines, viz. *gotra* and, still later, *pravara* exogamy); and forbidden degrees among *sapiṇḍas*. Baudhāyana (fifth century B.C.) has no great penance for *sagotra* marriages and only a Kṛc̥ra for the birth of a son from such a union; but 1,500 years later Vijñāneśvara violently condemns *sagotra* marriages, calls the wife a *Cāṇ-ḍālī*, and classes her issue likewise. Greek, Roman and Persian customs have no parallel to *gotra* exogamy. Karandikar suspects the influence of non-brahmin (pre-Aryan ?) totemic exogamy in the growing rigidity of sept exogamy. O. Bertold in a review<sup>3</sup> points out the secondary nature of the sources on which Karandikar relies for his study of aboriginal tribes, thinks that all their names are totemistic, and says that his own studies (unpublished) had led him to the same conclusion; he adds: "I considered my reasons insufficient in a matter of such important. By the present work of S. V. Karandikar I consider the problems of Hindu exogamy to have been definitely solved." R. J. Richards has another review<sup>4</sup> of the book also worth our attention. He draws attention to two systems of exogamy: (a) sept

<sup>3</sup> *Archiv Orientali*, II. 192-93.

<sup>4</sup> *Man*, April 1930, No. 54.

exogamy analogous to clan exogamy characteristic of the classificatory system of relationship all the world over; (b) *sapinda* exogamy resembling the more capricious restrictions of Christian ecclesiastic tables of kindred and affinity. Of (a) there is no trace in Vedic literature; Manu III, 5 is the earliest reference where it means only "family" or "name," i.e. an exogamous clan of the normal Dravidian type. Manu's text is:

*Asapindā ca yā mātuh asagotrā ca yā pituh  
sā praśatā dvijātīnam darakarmaṇi maithune*

The far-reaching scheme of Vedic pedigrees is the result of fusion and standardization worked out by jurists (like Varna samkara theory) having little in common with the simple social units from which the *gotras* were originally derived. Dravidians stoutly resisted the expansion of prohibited degrees and refused to tamper with cross-cousin marriages. Not so in North India where a puritanizing zeal has in some socially ambitious castes outdone the Brahmins.

Richards also points out that Karandikar's ethnology is rather sketchy. Indo-Aryan is applied to race, language and culture indiscriminately; Brahmins are treated as one homogeneous group. He ignores also that sections of non-brahmin society have often been raised by royal decree to Brahmin status. But his main conclusion is correct that *gotra* exogamy is modelled on indigenous prototypes while *sapinda* exogamy is not.

Independent India has legalized *sagotra* marriages.



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